

St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School, Lowton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106507
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	355964
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Derek Morris
Headteacher	Mrs Kathryn Vernon
Date of previous school inspection	30 November 2007
School address	Cranham Avenue Lowton, Warrington Cheshire WA3 2PQ
Telephone number	01942 671528
Fax number	01942 671528
Email address	enquiries@admin.lowtonsaintcatherines.wigan.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2010
Inspection number	355964

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 1234 234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 16 lessons and nine teachers. Meetings were held with members of the school council, representatives of the pupils' Eco committee, senior and middle leaders, teaching assistants and members of the governing body. The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised school development planning, documentation relating to the monitoring of pupils' progress, reports from the school improvement partner and pupils' workbooks. The inspectors scrutinised 115 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and also questionnaires completed by pupils in Key Stage 2 and by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. Inspectors looked in detail at the following:

- The school's judgement that pupils' learning and progress is good.
- The level of challenge in teaching and whether it ensures that more able pupils attain highly.
- The impact of the school's strategies to accelerate progress and improve attainment in writing.
- Whether assessment and marking are used effectively to foster more rapid progress for all groups of pupils.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average school. Most pupils are White British. A few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below that usually found. The school has attained Healthy School status, Artsmark (Gold) and, as an Eco School, received its fourth Green Flag award this year. A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It is improving quickly. Care, guidance and support are outstanding and pupils respond very positively, with consistently high attendance and excellent behaviour. Parents and carers pay extensive tribute to what the school does through comments such as, 'The staff at St Catherine's work extremely hard to make sure there are a wide range of experiences which foster the learning of the pupils in their charge.' In addition, partnerships with schools in the local cluster complement pupils' learning exceptionally well.

Children enter the Reception Year with skills generally in line with expectations for their age overall, although around a third join with lower than expected skills in writing and social development. As a result of good progress, some though not all, attain the early learning goals by entry to Year 1. There was a dip in attainment in Year 6 in 2009, when fewer pupils than usual attained at the higher National Curriculum level. Pupils made good progress and achieved well so that attainment in 2010 was above average by the end of Year 6. There are, however, differences year by year in the proportion of pupils who attain highly. Although improving, attainment in writing lags behind that in reading. The good curriculum has yet to provide the fullest of opportunities for pupils to use their writing and mathematics skills. The school is at an early stage of developing more opportunities in Reception to nurture children's independence outdoors. Pupils' attainment in art and design is a major strength, demonstrated by the vibrant displays around school.

Pupils are very proud of their school. Older pupils enjoy looking after younger ones. Members of the school council are ever-willing to voice their views on school improvement. Similarly, members of the Eco council are proactive in their development of the community wildlife garden, and the accurate comments they make on environmental protection and sustainability belie their years. Teaching is good overall. Although not consistent, there are examples of the excellent practice in the way the more able pupils are challenged to attain highly. Assessment has improved markedly since the previous inspection and teachers are embedding this in order that they can identify even more rapidly when pupils need further support.

The school knows itself well: staff and members of the governing body have an accurate awareness of school performance in all areas of its life. This together with good improvements since the last inspection demonstrates St Catherine of Siena's good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further accelerate pupils' progress by:
- - developing their skills in writing

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

- - sharing the exemplary practice in teaching, particularly in relation to challenge for more able pupils
- - continuing to develop the curriculum in order that pupils have even more opportunities to reinforce English and mathematics in other subjects
- - building upon the good practice in assessment to inform staff even earlier of where pupils need extra support.
- Develop the outdoor area in the Reception class in order to foster greater independence in children's learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enter class with smiles on their faces, delighted to meet their friends and the adults who work with them. They enjoy the many opportunities they have to share ideas and are delighted when their classmates experience success in their learning. Pupils of all abilities including those learning English as an additional language make good progress and achieve well overall. As a result of high-quality support from teaching assistants, a significant number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress in their personal development. Pupils attain above average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.. The proportion of pupils that attain highly for their age varies year on year. Pupils' progress in writing is improving, as a result of a range of initiatives, including the school's involvement in the local authority Writing Project, although it is not as rapid as progress in reading and mathematics. Nonetheless, when pupils are required to produce assignments for a specific audience and which are related to real-life situations, for example, a diary of children taken away from their homes in Australia, they rise to the challenge and are often surprised at what they can do.

Pupils have the utmost confidence in their teachers and teaching assistants and say, 'We can go to them if we have problems and they help us solve them.' As a result, pupils feel secure in school and also have a good awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe. They talk confidently and accurately about the importance of eating healthily and take part in a variety of physical activities to keep fit. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good: pupils demonstrate an enviable social conscience and their involvement in a variety of charity appeals reflects an impressive generosity of spirit. Pupils' good achievement in English and mathematics, their good skills in information and communication technology, their excellent behaviour and high attendance prepare them well for the next stage in their education and beyond.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

In the best lessons teachers have high expectations of their pupils and the more able pupils are challenged realistically to aim exceedingly high. In an outstanding Year 6 English lesson, for example, pupils worked in pairs to act as extra learning resources for each other. As a result, they defined 'personification' with the utmost accuracy and were able to compare and contrast the imagery contained in two quite complex poems with great confidence. In all lessons, there is sensitive support from teaching assistants. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are often surprised at the contributions they are able to make to class discussion as a result. In a minority of lessons, there is too much teacher direction. As a result, the pace of learning slows and pupils do not begin their individual and group assignments quickly enough. Assessment and marking have improved since the previous inspection and the school is now beginning to build upon these improvements to inform staff even earlier of where pupils need extra support.

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and academic development and the school provides increased opportunities for pupils to reinforce their English and mathematical skills across a range of subjects, through the Year 6 geography topic on Australia for example. The curriculum for art and design is outstanding and pupils in all years produce imaginative drawings, paintings and models, which adorn classrooms and corridors. Pupils' understanding of the environment and how it may be protected is fostered well by the school's emphasis on Eco work and the extensive wildlife garden also

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

enjoyed by members of the local community. A wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities includes visits and visitors. Pupils speak positively of the variety of after-school clubs, which they attend in large numbers.

Pastoral care is of the highest quality. All staff, including the outstanding team of teaching assistants, ensure that individual pupils can access everything the school has to offer. Indeed, pupils are proactively involved in supporting their classmates and younger pupils to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to take part in as many school activities as possible. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those identified as vulnerable receive excellent support and make progress which is at least as good as their classmates. Induction and transition procedures are held in high regard by pupils, parents and carers and the school's outstanding partnerships with the local cluster of schools ensure that those in Year 6 are fully prepared for entry into secondary education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The perceptive headteacher and the talented and committed senior leadership team lead by example and engender good levels of teamwork across the school. As a result, all staff are active in evaluating school performance and in a shared vision for development. As they say, 'Our opinions are valued and the coordination teams in which we work enable us to advise and support each other.' The governing body provides good support and is well aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. It holds the leadership to account with rigour and is ambitious for the school.

The school is most effective in its partnerships. It encourages parents and carers to play a good part in their children's learning. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated: the school quite rightly prides itself on its inclusive approach and promotes equality of opportunity well. Safeguarding and child protection procedures in particular are good and fully meet current requirements. Training is up to date and relevant policies and practice regularly reviewed. The school promotes community cohesion well. Local residents benefit from the wildlife garden, there are good relations with a variety of schools within the local cluster and through the curriculum pupils learn about religions and cultures which are different to their own, for example, through a developing link with a school in South Africa.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Reception class from a variety of settings. As a result of good teaching and very well focused support for those experiencing difficulty, children make good progress throughout the year in all areas of learning. Their personal, social and emotional development is a particular strength: they behave very well indeed, play and share happily together in the role-play areas indoors and are more than willing to show their work to visitors. They are creative in their learning and often take the lead in choosing games and activities. Their writing and mathematics are developing well and they can identify missing numbers even when they are presented in reverse order.

Leadership and management are good, teamwork is of the essence and staff have a secure understanding of the strengths of the setting and also where it can be developed. They recognise, for example, that there is a need to develop the outdoor area so that it reflects the vibrancy of the indoor classroom and provides further opportunities to develop pupils' independent learning. Nonetheless, staff promote the welfare of each individual and safeguarding policy and practice are strengths. Continuous monitoring of children's progress leads to an accurate evaluation of their performance and to flexible curricular planning to meet individual needs. Parents and carers are actively involved in the home-school diaries, which allow them to play a positive part in supporting their children's learning. They speak most positively of communication and also of, in their words, 'The wonderful way the staff treat our children.'

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents and carers, who returned a questionnaire, expressed the view that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps them safe. In addition, a very large majority is entirely happy with their children's experiences at the school, that it meets their particular needs and that teachers inform home of how well children are doing. As parents and carers comment, 'St Catherine's is a warm and welcoming school and our children absolutely love it.' A very small minority is of the opinion that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors judged pupils' conduct in lessons and around school to be exemplary.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School, Lowton to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 115 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 204 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	54	48	44	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	60	55	49	45	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	33	30	71	65	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	31	64	59	6	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	49	45	53	49	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	26	67	61	9	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	38	63	58	5	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	37	34	59	54	7	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	36	63	58	5	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	33	58	53	9	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	17	76	70	8	7	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	34	31	60	55	4	4	4	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	51	47	52	48	3	3	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



5 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School, Lowton, Warrington, WA3 2PQ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. You were very kind and polite and we enjoyed watching you learn. We are particularly grateful to those members of the school council who came to talk to us and to the boys and girls of the Eco council who gave the lead inspector a tour of your impressive wildlife garden.

St Catherine of Siena is a good school. You gave us so many reasons why you are so proud of it. Your attendance and behaviour are first class and, because you receive good teaching and excellent support from the adults who work with you, you are progressing well in your studies and attaining above average results in English and mathematics. You have a good understanding of how to keep yourselves and others safe and know full well what makes a balanced diet and why healthy food and physical exercise are important in our lives.

Your headteacher and all the other staff want to make the school even better for you. To do this the inspectors judge that the school needs to: help you make even more progress by giving you extra opportunities to practise your English and mathematics in other subjects and by encouraging you to write about real-life situations. Also, to further challenge those of you who sometimes find the work easy and to ensure that teachers find out quickly when some of you need extra help. As you know, the children in Reception Year are very happy in the class. Even so inspectors have asked your teachers to improve the outdoor area to help the children become more independent learners.

Please keep working hard, looking after each other and enjoying school.

Yours sincerely

Jim Kidd

Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.