

St Oswald's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111369
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	385896
Inspection dates	11–12 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Mark Williams HMI

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	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Emma Higham
Headteacher	Helen Lennon
Date of previous school inspection	June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Teaching and learning were observed in 14 lessons, with eight teachers seen. In addition, inspectors held meetings with school leaders, three groups of pupils, three governors, a group of parents, and held telephone discussions with the former School Improvement Partner and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work, including sessions led by external providers and volunteers, scrutinised data relating to pupils' achievement and policies relating to safeguarding, and took into account the questionnaires returned by 83 pupils, 19 staff and 63 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Is the picture of pupils' current work one of good and sustained learning and progress for all groups of pupils, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?
- Are the attitudes and attributes demonstrated by pupils across the school and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage outstanding as the school evaluates?
- How stimulating and memorable is the provision and does teaching inspire pupils to excel? If so, what is the overall impact on pupils' learning and development?
- How well have leaders, including the governing body, brought about improvement since the previous inspection and how effectively are they dealing with areas they themselves have identified, namely the need to improve the achievement of pupils in mathematics, of boys in writing in Key Stage 1, and for the less- and more-able pupils in Key Stage 2?

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average in size. The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities supported at school action plus, is above average, although a smaller than average percentage of pupils has a statement of special educational needs. The school holds a number of awards, including the Healthy Schools award, the Sports Activemark, Investors in People, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Leading Parent Partnership Award, the Sing Up Gold Award, and, most recently, the Inclusion Quality Mark.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

'What is best for the children?' This is the key question that leaders, including the members of the governing body, in this outstanding school constantly ask and use to focus their efforts. As a result the school is rigorous in its evaluation of all it does and provides. It knows its strengths, of which there are many, and its areas for development well. The impact of this rigour and pursuit of high-quality provision is that the school is successful in making improvements and, most importantly, outcomes for pupils are outstanding. The confidence in the school expressed by parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire is well placed. Such strong features show why the school's capacity for sustained improvement is also outstanding.

While standards attained by pupils dipped following the school's previous inspection in June 2009, they are now above average overall and represent good progress from broadly average starting points. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception class) and pupils in Years 1 to 6 have got off to a flying start in their learning and are already making good progress. This is because of excellent teaching that engages and inspires pupils in their learning very well and outstanding levels of care, guidance and support, which ensure those whose circumstances make them vulnerable make progress at least as good as their peers. Leaders had previously recognised the need to improve the achievement of pupils in mathematics, of boys in writing in Key Stage 1, and for the less- and more-able pupils in Key Stage 2. As a result of concerted efforts, success in these areas has been achieved already.

Pupils are developing, at a good pace, skills that will contribute well to their future economic well-being. Their spiritual, moral and social development is a particular strength as demonstrated by excellent behaviour and the care pupils show to one another. Pupils' awareness of cultures other than their own is more limited. Nevertheless, the school is aware of this and has already put good-quality plans into place to address this need and to strengthen its already good promotion of community cohesion, including establishing links with schools abroad and its pursuit of the International Global Award. These plans will also strengthen the already good curriculum. Further outstanding attributes demonstrated by pupils include their awareness and understanding of being healthy, keeping safe, and making important contributions to the community. All-in-all, St Oswald's Catholic Primary School is a highly inclusive school in which equally high expectations are met.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders know the school's strengths and areas for development very well and these have been confirmed by inspection. They already have plans in place to address these that focus clearly on outcomes for pupils. School leaders should see these plans through to fruition.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Outcomes for pupils are outstanding. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in their learning to attain above average standards by the time they leave school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are considered vulnerable receive high-quality support and achieve as well as their peers. The dip in standards – owing to a sharper dip in mathematics – is being arrested successfully. This was evident in the inspection by pupils confidently participating fully in mathematics lessons and solving problems. Likewise, boys in Key Stage 1 are improving their writing and the more-able pupils in Key Stage 2 are receiving greater challenge in their work. These improvements are the result of focused efforts by leaders and excellent teaching that ensures pupils want to give of their best.

Beautiful singing in preparation for a 'Welcome Mass' and whoops of joy for friends as they recognised three-dimensional shapes and named their properties highlight pupils' strong and well-honed spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils' enjoyment of school is evidenced further in their high rates of attendance and in their willing participation in the range of extra-curricular activities on offer. It is also evidenced in the excellent behaviour that was observed during the inspection; behaviour that stemmed from good manners, mutual respect and high expectations. This excellent behaviour, particularly in lessons, makes a strong contribution to their learning and the progress they make as well as helping to create an atmosphere for purposeful working. Pupils articulate well their understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle with older pupils, for example, linking smoking to breathing difficulties. They are also keenly aware of the need to keep safe. Two examples illustrate this. First, Year 5 pupils, under the direction of an external provider, checked that both their bicycles and helmets were in good working order before embarking on road safety training. Second, pupils spoken with, were acutely aware of the water hazards in close proximity of the school, spoke confidently not only of dangers lurking beneath the surface but also of the impact of swallowing dirty water. Of particular note is the pupils' outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. They willingly take on roles and responsibilities, such as being members of the eco council. They have also helped design the school garden with children and adults from other schools in mind, so that arrangements for accessibility are good. Pupils are involved in a range of opportunities including charitable funding for local and national hospices and hospitals, participating in the Tatton Park Flower Show, and singing with other schools as part of the 'Young Voice: One World Choir'.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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

How effective is the provision?

There are many strengths in the provision, not least the good-quality curriculum with its opportunities for enrichment including the teaching of Spanish, the learning of keyboard skills, educational visits and the extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of the more vulnerable pupils. Pupils enjoy their learning very much although, as leaders are aware and are addressing, there is sometimes an over-reliance on worksheets and a need for pupils to extend their knowledge of cultures other than their own. Also good is the use of assessment to inform learning, particularly in the level of questioning during lessons. The marking of pupils work in English is a strength as it makes clear to pupils what they need to do to improve. It is more variable across other subjects.

Two aspects of provision are outstanding: the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of care, guidance and support. Lessons are planned well and, as a result, teachers know the skills and abilities of the different groups of pupils in their classes. Questions asked are thought provoking and prompt the pupils into solving problems and finding solutions for themselves. Other adults, such as teaching assistants and volunteers, are deployed very well to get the most from group work. In lessons, teachers check frequently how well the pupils are doing and, when necessary, make changes to ensure that at least good learning is taking place. Expectations of what pupils are to learn are high. Pupils understand these, respond to them well and thoroughly enjoy their learning. Two examples illustrate this. In a Year 6 literacy lesson the pupils confidently and articulately used an increasingly wide range of vocabulary to highlight their understanding of narrative poetry and the power of imagery. In a Year 2 numeracy lesson, skilful, targeted questioning and demands for correct vocabulary saw these young pupils, much to the delight of their peers, accurately use terms such as 'vertices', 'faces' and 'edges' to describe a range of three-dimensional shapes.

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

This school cares deeply for its pupils and is highly inclusive. It works tirelessly with a range of external agencies so that pupils considered to be vulnerable are identified early and provided with high-quality support. This enables them to make good progress in their learning. As importantly, if not more so, it enables them also to improve their self-esteem. A particularly strong feature of the support is the specific targeting of pupils in order to equip them with the skills they need for learning so that, by the end of a challenging timescale, they no longer need such help. This policy is already bearing fruit. Arrangements to support pupils moving onto high school are very effective and begin early.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
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?

Leaders, including members of the governing body, are open, honest and mutually challenging. The well respected headteacher is very clear, as is her leadership team and the governing body, about the strengths of the school, the high expectations demanded, and what areas – while still good – need to be developed further. The school runs very smoothly as a community with all knowing their roles and responsibilities very well. The governing body discharges all its duties most effectively, particularly in ensuring pupils are kept safe and in ensuring it understands the data presented to it regarding pupils' achievement.

Parents, carers, staff and pupils, through discussions and questionnaires, are confident in leaders and the school. Relationships with parents and carers are strong. Their help is welcomed and to this end a number has been trained by the headteacher to work in the school as volunteers - training that includes how best to assist teachers to support pupils' learning and personal development. Through the thorough analysis of the school's performance, leaders have put into place a number of plans to ensure no pupil is left behind. These plans, such as those to improve boys' writing and achievement in mathematics, are working well and already showing positive results. Such awareness, planning and success demonstrate the school is outstanding in promoting equality of opportunity. Improvement since the previous inspection has been strong with the promotion of community cohesion now good. This school is very well placed to improve even further. The resources allocated to it are deployed outstandingly well.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1

The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Excellent leadership and provision ensure the youngest children in the school get off to a cracking start and, as a result, make at least good and improving progress in their learning and development. Inside and outside, the Reception area stimulates imagination and all adults build on this well. Planning takes children’s interests into account very well and ensures an appropriate balance between adult-led and child-initiated activity. Children, for example, in enjoying the book ‘*The Gruffalo*’ were able to use computers to create and show off proudly their own versions of the creature, identify with delight words such as ‘claws’ and ‘teeth’ as they were modelled by the teacher and other children, and, with a teaching assistant, move with eager anticipation around the woodland area through trees and under branches searching for creatures hiding away. Such stimulating activities are leading to children developing earlier reading and writing skills well. Already the children know the routines of the Reception class well. This is testament to the high-quality arrangements for induction which involve parents and carers very well.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Sixty three parents responded to the inspection questionnaire with all but a very few expressing positive comments and confidence in the school. This inspection confirms the positive response of parents and carers. Inspectors note also the very detailed and regular information the school provides parents and carers, through the weekly newsletters for example. Of the very few who responded with a concern, this was related in the main to behaviour. As this report highlights pupils’ behaviour, not only through observations but through discussions also, is judged to be outstanding and sensitively managed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Oswald's Catholic Primary School 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 63 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 207 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	71	17	27	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	86	9	14	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	65	21	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	67	17	27	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	50	79	12	19	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	63	22	35	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	71	16	25	2	3	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)	41	65	18	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	71	17	27	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	52	24	38	5	8	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	63	18	29	4	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	48	76	13	21	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	76	14	22	0	0	0	0

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



13 October 2011

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Oswald's Catholic Primary School, Warrington, WA1 3LB

Thank you all for the very warm welcome you gave to the inspection team. We enjoyed greatly watching you at work and play and listening to your views. You told us that you are happy at St Oswald's and feel very safe. We agree and were very impressed at the way you made your way sensibly outside when the fire alarm sounded; indeed you know a great deal about keeping safe and being healthy. We were also impressed at your excellent behaviour. We found you to be polite and well-mannered young people and you should be proud of that. You should also be proud of your contributions to the community, such as in singing and fund-raising for a local hospice.

We could also see in your much higher-than-average attendance how much you enjoy school and your learning. You benefit from a good curriculum and excellent teaching. Your school also cares for you very well indeed, especially if you need a little extra help or support. In your lessons you were enthusiastic about your learning, exploring touch in science in Year 1, finding hidden creatures as part of '*The Gruffalo*' story in Reception, and using imagery in Year 6 for example.

So how is all this possible? Well, we know you work very hard, but so do all the adults in the school. In all their discussions they ask, 'What is best for the children?' Your school is very well led by your headteacher, leaders and the governing body. As they know the school very well all we have asked them to do is to carry on with the plans they have to make your school even better, for example, by providing you with a greater awareness and experience of people from different cultures.

So, how good is your school? I am delighted to tell you it is 'outstanding'! Congratulations to everyone! On behalf of the inspection team, best wishes to you all for the future!

Yours sincerely

Mark Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

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