

St Filumena's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124350
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	380866
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

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	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Pennington
Headteacher	Michael Wheatley
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2009
School address	Blythe Bridge Road, Caverswall Blythe Bridge Stoke-on-Trent ST11 9EA
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Sixteen lessons were observed taught by 9 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, parents, governors and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, including attending Mass with the pupils and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding and equalities policies. Inspectors analysed 104 questionnaires returned by pupils, 10 by staff and 95 completed by parents.

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

- How secure is children's acquisition of basic skills of reading, writing and number in the Early Years Foundation Stage?
- What is the impact of the recent Painsley Catholic Collegiate Federation on improving the quality of teaching and learning?
- How well does the school promote community cohesion, especially at a global level?

Information about the school

This school is smaller than average and many children travel from nearby towns and villages to attend. Almost all pupils are White British and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below that seen nationally. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is well below average. The school has a number of awards including the Healthy Schools Award and the Eco Award. The school operates a well attended breakfast club which is managed by the governing body. In January 2011 the school became part of a federation with five primary and one secondary catholic school (Painsley Catholic Collegiate Federation). One governing body presides over the schools but each school has retained a governing body committee made up of members of the above.

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

The school provides an outstanding quality of education for its pupils. The school's motto 'I am loved' is evident where pupils' uniqueness is valued. A strong faith-based ethos contributes to outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils. 'Children are taught to work hard, be respectful of others and help those who are less fortunate than themselves. What else could a parent ask for?' said one parent, speaking for many.

Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 is high and has been so for the past three years. Pupils are highly confident speakers, voracious readers, competent writers and very able mathematicians. The cornerstone of the school's success is the professionalism of all staff who successfully give the pupils a first class educational experience through consistent, outstanding teaching. As a result, all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve exceptionally well in relation to their prior attainment.

Excellent achievement starts in the Early Years Foundation Stage where children acquire basic skills at a fast rate through highly creative learning experiences. All children are very well prepared for work in Years 1 and 2, especially in their sounding out of letters, early writing and number acquisition. Throughout the school, memorable learning experiences, such as whole school topics around favourite stories, are expertly crafted by staff who have as much fun planning as pupils have learning.

The outstanding curriculum is matched to every pupil's individual needs and the excellent use of assessment for building on previously acquired skills contributes to pupils' outstanding progress. Pupils are highly motivated, keen to learn and behave impeccably. No pupil is left behind; the teachers track the pupils' progress very carefully and put in support if needed. The school has worked very hard to ensure that standards of writing in Year 2 match the high standards of reading. While good progress is being made, some pupils in Years 1 and 2 struggle to use descriptive vocabulary because of the occasional lack of visual prompts. Pupils' achievement in science is very impressive as scientific skills of hypothesis, synthesis and evaluation are systematically taught through real life contexts, such as exploring how parents can make financial savings using less electricity.

Pupils have expert knowledge of healthy eating, encouraging parents to buy healthy options. They work exceptionally well in groups during lessons. They are very active

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in the parish, especially in preparing liturgy readings, but their knowledge of other faiths, cultures and traditions is less well developed. Community cohesion at a local level is outstanding but knowledge of the multi-cultural nature of Britain and the wider global community is not as strong.

Pupils are very well cared for, safeguarding procedures are excellent and pupils say that they feel very safe and exceptionally well cared for in school. 'Our teachers are very caring and they really help us learn. That is why we love coming to school.' said one member of the school council. Attendance is high and, coupled with the excellent achievement and outstanding social skills, pupils are very well prepared for their next steps in education.

The success of the school is down to the outstanding leadership and management at all levels. Self-evaluation is accurate and the headteacher sets high expectations. As a result of a review undertaken by the headteachers of the federation, teaching has improved even more. Governance is outstanding and the benefits of the federation are already paying dividends as best practice is shared with other schools and cost effectiveness is apparent in savings on services. Given the pupils' outstanding outcomes and excellent provision, the school's capacity to improve is exceptionally good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities for pupils in Years 1 and 2 to have access to visual prompts in lessons to develop their descriptive vocabulary so that standards in writing can equate with the high standards in reading by the end of this academic year.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about life in multi-cultural Britain and globally.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Outstanding learning in this school is demonstrated by pupils being totally absorbed in their tasks. They know what they need to do next as a result of very detailed marking. Pupils achieve very highly through excellent group work and team skills. The foundations of exemplary learning start in the Early Years Foundation Stage where children enter with skills that are below those expected in literacy and numeracy and make rapid progress in learning through play. Given the starting points, achievement, both in Reception and by the end of Year 6, is excellent. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified very early and provision is tailor-made to suit their needs. Parents are informed every step of the way and they work very closely with teachers to ensure that all aspects of homework are carried out. Every intervention for any pupils not keeping up is closely monitored and adjusted as necessary. Teaching assistants support learning very well. Pupils leave school being well equipped for coping with the next stage in learning.

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All learning is very focused, pupils feel very safe in learning and classrooms are hubs of activity with pupils having plenty of hands-on experiences to ensure learning makes sense. For example, in an excellent Year 2 lesson on coordinates, the class teacher laid out grids on which pupils physically practised instructions before tackling a work sheet which they completed quickly and accurately. In an excellent mathematics lesson in Year 6, the higher-attaining pupils translated imperial weights to metric while cooking shortbread. They worked very well in groups and could see the importance of accuracy when measuring ingredients.

Spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Pupils demonstrate great reverence in prayer, they have excellent knowledge of the impact of their actions on others and that values of trust, honesty and care are important in relationships.

Pupils' high take up of sport in the excellent range of extra-curricular activities and their very secure knowledge of healthy eating supports their excellent awareness of healthy life styles. Pupils have a wide range of responsibilities such as 'eco-monitors', buddies at play time, classroom monitors, librarians and school councillors and these contribute to their excellent achievement of economic well-being and preparation for secondary school life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Consistent high quality of teaching and learning makes a significant contribution to

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

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pupils' excellent learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are outstanding and high degree of care is apparent in all classes due to excellent safeguarding procedures. There is consistency of approach in the sharing of learning intentions and pupils' understanding is regularly checked through 'mini-plenaries'. Literacy and numeracy skills are very well taught in all classes.

Teachers are very keen to improve on previous best performance. The headteacher has developed a highly effective team of professionals who share best practice with one another. Teachers' continuous professional development is a high priority so that, for example, training in the use of target setting and using information from assessment has considerably improved practice. 'Only the best will do' underpins all aspects of teachers' work. They work relentlessly at ensuring that all groups of pupils make accelerated progress. Care, guidance and support are first rate, all pupils are known as individuals and their needs are well known to staff.

The vibrant curriculum is underpinned by excellent opportunities for personal development and well-being. Very good opportunities are provided for writing and mathematics in other subjects. Information and communication technology is used very well to develop pupils' research skills or to practise skills such as phonics and times tables. Visits and visitors enhance the curriculum and pupils have excellent opportunities to collaborate with the high school in the federation in sports, modern foreign language learning and cross-phase preparation.

Breakfast club is very well-attended and provides a nourishing start to the day. Systems for maintaining high attendance are excellent and the federation has adopted a common approach to sending parents texts regarding lateness and non-attendance at a very cost effective price. Partnerships with schools in the federation are outstanding and best practice is shared among the schools. This contributes significantly to both succession planning and sustainability.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff morale is very high because of the excellent leadership and management of the headteacher. Teaching and learning are very well monitored with clear targets given for improvement and discussed through performance management.

Safeguarding practices are exemplary and governors go out of their way to seek best

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practice in other schools and compare that with their own. All staff ensure that they promote equality of opportunity and there is no discrimination. The performance of different groups is thoroughly evaluated resulting in minimal differences in achievement. The school works very closely with families and even grandparents play a large part in supporting children with homework.

The school is a very strong and cohesive community which contributes to all aspects of community life. Pupils collect for Cafod, contribute to Father Hudson’s homes and participate in all church festivals but their knowledge of diverse cultures in Britain is not as strong as their awareness of their immediate surroundings.

Governance is outstanding. Governors have an independent view of the school and hold staff to account. The committee works relentlessly at ensuring that all statutory requirements are met including regular training for safeguarding.

These are the grades for 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	1
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

Children make rapid progress from their lower than expected starting points. They have an excellent knowledge of phonics and over half of them are reading simple books. A rich curriculum, scrupulously designed by the highly creative Early Years Foundation Stage teacher and her team, is based upon turning children’s interest levels into high quality learning experiences. Learning is characterised by children being heavily absorbed in play activities through which they acquire basic skills. Currently, for example, the classroom resembles the North and South Poles with children being explorers. They learn their numbers by counting webbed feet of animals found in this habitat. Activities are very well structured with high quality intervention from both the teacher and teaching assistants. Staff model play and this

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helps children use resources effectively. A very well resourced outdoor area extends children’s learning. Children make boats out of cardboard boxes to take them fishing on the cold seas.

Correct letters and number formation are taught through meaningful play activities such as booking tickets to see Antarctic wildlife. Children thrive due to excellent safeguarding procedures and welfare arrangements which ensure a very safe learning environment.

Parents and carers are constantly informed of their children’s progress and the part that they can play in learning. Leadership and management are outstanding because of effective planning systems, well-informed teaching assistants, excellent partnerships with parents and highly effective teaching.

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	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They know that their children are very well looked after and they cannot praise the school enough. ‘My child is well mannered, thoughtful and thinks of the needs of others.’ ‘This is an exceptional school which provides our children with an excellent start to secondary school.’ are typical of the views of delighted parents. A very small minority of parents was not pleased with information on children’s progress, lack of progress being made, lack of information on how to support learning, insufficient emphasis on developing a healthy lifestyle and the school not meeting children’s needs. All these areas were investigated but inspectors could not find any evidence to support these minority views. The school has an open-door policy where parents are made welcome to express any concerns that they might have.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Filumena'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 95 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 192 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	77	81	17	18	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	75	79	20	21	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	60	63	33	35	1	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	65	68	29	31	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	74	80	19	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	68	72	24	26	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	68	72	25	26	2	2	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)	64	69	26	28	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	59	62	34	36	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	60	65	28	30	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	51	55	39	42	0	0	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	80	85	14	15	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	79	83	16	17	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 are 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.



21 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Filumena's Catholic Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST11 9EA

Thank you for making us feel so welcome in your school. We agree with you that your school is outstanding and here are just some of the many strengths we found.

- All of you, achieve exceptionally well. You are making excellent progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science and you are very well prepared for secondary school.
- You get on very well with one another, there is no bullying and the playground buddies do an excellent job. You behave impeccably in and around the school, have excellent attitudes to learning and are both polite and very well mannered. You thrive on excellent learning opportunities and you really enjoy all lessons.
- You are very well looked after by your headteacher and teachers and the school provides you with an outstanding education. Your teachers do an excellent job.
- Your headteacher and senior staff lead the school very well and your governors are very well informed of all the things that you do. They ensure that you learn in an exceptionally safe environment and enable you to do very well in school.
- You have excellent links with the local community and you contribute very well to all aspects of church and parish life.

We have asked your teachers to help those of you in Years 1 and 2 to have more access to words that will help you even more in your writing. You can help by asking your teachers to give you more word lists and display words you struggle with on your classroom walls. We have also asked your teachers to give you more information on children's lives in Britain and other countries, how they worship and what customs and traditions prevail. You can help by asking your teachers to tell you more about these things.

Keep working hard.

Yours sincerely
Bogusia Matusiak-Varley
Lead inspector

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