

St John's Catholic Primary School, Skelmersdale

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119586
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	395293
Inspection dates	24–25 April 2012
Lead inspector	Susan Walsh

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Flanagan
Headteacher	Angela Aspinwall-Livesey
Date of previous school inspection	2 April 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Susan Walsh
Anthony Buckley

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 21 lessons led by eight of the school's teachers. Meetings were held with staff as well as with members of the governing body and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work. They also looked at development plans, records of pupils' progress and arrangements for safeguarding as well as other documents. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They also scrutinised 60 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as questionnaires returned by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

The school is slightly smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils who are known to be entitled to free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average and is exceptionally high in some year groups. Most pupils are of White British heritage but the number of pupils who speak English as an additional language and who are from East European heritages and the number of pupils who join the school late are increasing. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher are the executive head and deputy headteacher of this school and another local school. Although they were in post at the time of the previous inspection, many of the class teachers were appointed after 2009. The headteacher is also the manager of the attached children's centre.

The school meets the current floor standards set by the government, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- This is a good school with an outstanding curriculum that ensures that pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Outstanding leadership and management have brought about speedy improvements to outcomes for pupils but this is not an outstanding school because the quality of teaching is no better than good and is currently promoting good achievement.
- Although pupils’ attainment was below average at the end of Year 6 in 2011, the gap between pupils’ attainment and the national average is narrowing quickly and securely. Pupils are making good progress in lessons and levels of attainment are rising. This represents good achievement. Children’s skills at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are low and improvements in this stage have been inconsistent.
- Teaching is usually good and there are examples of outstanding teaching, particularly in Years 2 and 6. Lively teaching combined with an exciting curriculum that is firmly based on pupils’ needs and interests ensures that pupils are exceptionally well motivated. Occasionally more-able pupils are not adequately challenged and their learning is not always robustly checked when they are working independently.
- Pupils’ behaviour is consistently outstanding both in lessons and around school. Pupils learn resilience and develop initiative and entrepreneurial skills. They are very well prepared for their next stage of education.
- All leaders and managers, including the governing body share a determination to secure the very best education for the pupils in their care. They have created a very high quality environment that encourages pupils to do well. They share an ambitious vision that is underpinned by rigorous monitoring, evaluation, detailed development planning and excellent leadership of teaching and performance management. Consequently, the school is rapidly improving and its capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the rate of improvements to outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that activities that children choose for themselves are planned with a clear learning outcome in mind
 - making sure that assessment information is used to plan activities that are closely matched to children's individual needs
 - making certain that communication, language and literacy and numeracy are taught every day, especially in the Reception class.

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that the work of more-able pupils is always rigorously checked especially when they are working independently
 - making sure that pupils are always activity involved in learning during phonics sessions
 - making certain that all teachers have consistently high expectations of the presentation of work and the accuracy of spellings and the use of punctuation.
 - making sure that there is sufficient challenge for more-able pupils in all lessons.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Almost all parents and carers believe that their children are making good progress and that their achievement is good, a view that was confirmed as correct during the inspection. Children start school with skills that are generally well below those expected for their age. They make good progress in developing their personal and social skills and in learning to speak while they are in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, their skills in reading, writing and numeracy are still well below those expected when they join Year 1. Improvements in outcomes at the end of the Early Year Foundation Stage are inconsistent and have not matched those seen in the rest of the school. Pupils are making good progress in lessons in Key Stage 1. In 2011, attainment at the end of Year 2 was below average but it had improved significantly on previous years, especially in reading and mathematics. Attainment is continuing to improve at a fast rate. Pupils develop satisfactory reading skills. They are able to break down and sound out unfamiliar words. They often read fluently and with high levels of confidence. A strong focus on developing writing skills means that pupils are making good progress in writing in lessons. For example, in a Year 2 lesson pupils were highly enthused by the pirate topic and were keen to write at length using super adjectives and time connectives that enhanced the quality of their writing.

This good progress continues in lessons in Key Stage 2. Older pupils have a real thirst for knowledge. Although attainment by the end of Year 6 was below average last year, including in reading, attainment is improving swiftly and securely because of good quality teaching and is now much closer to the national average. Guided reading lessons are used well to make sure that pupils develop a broad range of reading skills and an enthusiasm for reading. Pupils have numerous opportunities to practice their writing including in real-life situations, such as applying for positions of responsibility, requesting after-school clubs and

developing business plans. Pupils really enjoy their mathematics lessons because they are challenging and the use of games makes them fun. The school's robust actions to meet the needs of all pupils are raising levels of attainment and boosting the progress of all groups of pupils, including those who join the school part way through their education. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also learn and achieve well. This is because support staff are very good at reshaping teacher's explanations and making certain that pupils with special educational needs are able to fully understand the concepts that are being taught.

Quality of teaching

Lessons are lively and exciting and ensure that all pupils' are thoroughly engaged with learning. Many parents and carers correctly think that teaching is good and say that staff are very easy to speak to. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, activities that children choose for themselves often capture their attention but, because learning outcomes have not been planned well enough, children's learning through play is not always maximised. The majority of teachers have high expectations of pupils in lessons but expectations of presentation can vary and this occasionally impacts on the quality of pupils' work. The majority of work is set at the right level to match pupils' requirements but in the Early Years Foundation Stage work is not always planned with individual needs in mind. Elsewhere the work set occasionally does not provide sufficient challenge for more-able pupils. Most teachers use questioning very well to extend learning and to check understanding but occasionally teachers do not always do enough to check the learning of more-able pupils when they are working independently. Teachers' marking, the use of individual academic targets and the good use of self-assessment make certain that pupils understand how to improve their own work. Occasionally mis-spellings and inaccurate use of punctuation go unchallenged.

The exiting curriculum is used well to enhance teaching. Teachers ensure that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are developed across a wide range of subjects. For example, the theme of 'The Victorians' was utilised well to develop pupils' research skills, including more complex reading skills, such as retrieving information from text. Although arrangements for the teaching of reading are generally good, occasionally in phonics lessons pupils spend too much time passively listening or watching others practise their skills, and this slows their learning. Many teachers use resources, including modern technology, extremely well to enhance learning. For example, an outstanding Year 6 lesson was introduced with piece of film, which established an atmosphere of mystery and expectation. This successfully illustrated how to create suspense in writing and ensured a high level of enthusiasm. Many teachers are exceptionally good at promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and this lesson was no exception and the sense of awe and wonder was palpable.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils make an exceptional contribution to the high standards of behaviour seen in the classroom and around school. For example, the very active school council has made a substantial contribution to developing a programme of events that promote consistently kind and thoughtful behaviour. Through a restorative approach pupils learn to manage their own behaviour and develop a highly evolved sense of justice. They have been thoroughly involved in writing the school's code of conduct which is meticulously followed. Pupils display a high level of courtesy and are able to cooperate extremely well. They are

resourceful and full of confidence because the curriculum successfully encourages them to develop these important personal skills. Additionally they are enthusiastic learners, for example, completing additional research at home because they want to know even more about a topic. Parents, carers, pupils and staff are all extremely positive about pupils' behaviour. Pupils say, and the school's thorough record keeping confirms, that bullying is extremely rare. Pupils of all backgrounds get on well together and pupils who are new to the school, including those who speak English as an additional language, are made extremely welcome. Pupils feel exceptionally safe in school. They know that teachers take their concerns extremely seriously and that even the most minor fallings out will be quickly and sensitively resolved. Pupils help in this by acting as peer mediators. Pupils are highly aware of how to manage unsafe situation. For example, Year 6 pupils have been recently involved in a drama production about safe use of the internet. Attendance rates are quickly improving because of the schools' robust approach to monitoring attendance and are currently above average.

Leadership and management

As a result of outstanding leadership and management, the school has improved outcomes for pupils and has continued to further enhance some outstanding aspects of provision, such as the curriculum. The determined leadership and drive of the headteacher, senior managers and the governing body has resulted in a strong sense of team spirit, and staff who are highly aspirational and committed to raising levels of attainment for pupils. The analysis of data by the headteacher and senior leaders is meticulous. The school is able to swiftly spot any pupil whose progress is in danger of slowing and offer timely and effective support. Leaders and managers actively promote equality and tackle discrimination and the school has carefully analysed the progress of different groups of pupils. Leaders have recognised the changes in the school population and have made certain that staff are knowledgeable about the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language and they keep a careful watch on the progress of those pupils who join the school at other than normal times in the school year. Teaching has improved because of rigorous monitoring and evaluation and the good use of performance management combined with robust staff development. Excellent partnerships have a positive impact on every aspect of school life. For example, the involvement with SHARES, a partnership of local schools, has enhanced opportunities for staff to access high quality training.

The curriculum provides a plethora of memorable experiences for pupils and is excellent at promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, their exceptional behaviour and their awareness of how to keep safe. It also ensures that pupils are thoroughly involved in their local community, including through acting as parliamentarians and playing in the brass band. Although the curriculum is exceptional in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, children in the Reception class are taught literacy and numeracy on alternate days and this slows their learning. The school's safeguarding procedures are robust and the high standard of care that is afforded to children and their families is enhanced by very close links with the attached children's centre.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



26 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Catholic Primary School, Skelmersdale, WN8 6PF

It was a delight and a privilege to visit your school. We really enjoyed talking to you all and listened very carefully to what you had to say. We were very impressed by your exemplary behaviour and your good manners. The school makes sure that you grown into very thoughtful and hardworking young people. You are right when you say that the school listens very carefully to your opinions. We were very interested in your plans to establish a Polish club. We hope the headteacher approves your application.

Until recently your attainment has been below that reached by other pupils nationally but you are rapidly catching up. You make good progress because there is a lot of good and some outstanding teaching in your school. In order to make all teaching outstanding, we have asked staff to make sure that those of you who find learning easy are always challenged and to make certain that they check your work regularly when you are working independently. We noticed that occasionally your work is not neatly presented and that sometimes you make mistakes in your spellings and use of punctuation so we have asked your teachers to help you to improve this. Many of you are successfully developing your reading skills but sometimes during phonics lessons pupils spend too long waiting for their turn to take part in an activity. Your school is getting better all the time. However, children's skills at the end of the Reception class are still behind those of other children. So we have asked your teachers to make sure that children are taught literacy and numeracy every day and to make sure that they are very clear about what children are expected to learn from the activities that they chose for themselves.

The leaders and managers at your school are doing a very good job and are working hard to make your school into one of the very best. You can help your school to improve further by continuing to work hard in lessons and always producing your neatest work.

Yours sincerely

Susan Walsh
Lead inspector

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