



St Philip's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106126
Local Authority Stockport
Inspection number 277494
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector Suzi Clipson-Boyles HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Half Moon Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Offerton, Stockport
Age range of pupils	4–11		Cheshire SK2 5LB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 4830977
Number on roll (school)	180	Fax number	0161 4830977
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr C Barber
		Headteacher	Mrs Bernadette Singleton
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2000		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This popular school is smaller than the average sized primary school. It is situated on the edge of a large estate that lies between Stockport and the Derbyshire hills. The estate was originally council owned but some houses are now privately owned. About a quarter of pupils live on this estate and the remainder are drawn from the wider parish boundaries. There are six classes and, apart from Reception and Year 1, they are each made up of two combined year groups. The majority of children are of White British heritage. The percentage eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is in line with that nationally.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This school has an outstanding impact on children's learning and personal development. All aspects of its work are at least good and in some areas they are exemplary. As a result, children make excellent overall progress as they move from class to class. When they start in the Foundation Stage, standards are broadly typical for their age. By the end of Year 6 standards are well above the national averages in English, mathematics and science. In other subjects, standards are good, but progress is not tracked as closely for different groups. The school has assessed its own performance accurately as outstanding for standards and achievement and good for teaching and learning and the curriculum. However, performance in all other areas is judged by inspectors to be higher than the school's own evaluation. The school carries out such evaluations very rigorously but it does not always link them up to other school improvement systems in ways that might save time.

The splendid outcomes for children here are due to excellent leadership and management. The headteacher runs things efficiently and effectively. She has extremely high expectations of children and adults alike and holds them all to account. Good learning is of high priority and so is good behaviour. The headteacher and the highly committed staff focus on every child as an individual, so each one feels included and achieves their best. As a result there is an orderly, happy and caring atmosphere in the school where all groups of learners achieve well. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress and this is a strength of the school. Governors also take an active role in ensuring that high standards are maintained.

Children enjoy coming to school very much and their attendance is good. Clear guidelines and good teaching help them to work cooperatively together. They are very caring towards one another. Many children show great confidence and maturity and they express their ideas and opinions without fear of rejection. They are proud of their school and love to help out wherever they can. They are enthusiastic about the after-school clubs and there is very good attendance at these. They receive a lot of help with their work, individually and in groups, which ensures that they make good progress. However, not all teachers give children enough responsibility for reflecting on their own work in order to think about what they might do better next time.

The school helps all children to develop an awareness of how to be safe. As a result of the many learning experiences provided, they are able to talk sensibly about issues from safety in the classroom to safety on the roads. From the time they start school they are taught to understand the relationship between behaviour and safety. Children from all classes move sensibly around the buildings and play well together even during wet playtimes. There are very few incidents of bullying and racism because the school has effective systems for preventing these. On the rare occasions when problems do arise, they are dealt with swiftly through effective sanctions and additional teaching. The children therefore feel that school is a safe and secure environment.

The school provides a range of opportunities for the children to learn about healthy lifestyles. They receive at least two hours of physical education (PE) each week and

many choose to stay for additional recreational activities after school. Children have a good understanding of the impact of this on their health. They also enjoy choosing the healthy snacks, nutritious lunches and water that are provided. Teachers plan themes on health into other areas of the curriculum. This captures the children's interest and helps their developing understanding. For instance, during the inspection Reception children were enjoying looking at and talking about exotic fruits as part of their topic work. Children have a good awareness of risks to health as demonstrated by Year 3 children who talked very frankly about the dangers of smoking.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The impressive progress that children make in this school contributes considerably towards their future economic well-being. They work very cooperatively and are confident to make decisions. The school council has influenced improvements, for instance they have helped in the refurbishment plans for new toilets. Opportunities to develop learning about the world of work start early. Reception children greeted inspectors in different languages, and Year 4 children talked knowledgeably about why the French they learn in school will be useful to them when they are older. Special jobs such as play leaders have to be applied for. Job interviews followed by training give the children a sense of pride and responsibility. Children are very aware of and interested in environmental issues and presented their own song at a local assembly for the parish as part of 'Living Green Living Well Week'. In the wider community, children are keen to raise money for local and international charities and take part in the organisation of this. Opportunities such as creating a sculpture for the local hospital help them broaden their skills and their understanding of the different worlds of work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Plan and assess the progression of skills in foundation subjects to ensure maximum achievement for all groups across the curriculum.
- Develop a school improvement cycle that makes more use of existing evidence from self-evaluation.
- Ensure that all teachers involve children more in identifying and planning their next steps for learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children make excellent progress during their time at this school. When they start in Reception different children come with different levels of abilities across the areas of learning, but the general levels are average overall. By the end of Reception many are reaching above the expected national levels for their age. Results in the national assessments at the end of Year 2 show that levels are higher than the national average for reading, writing and mathematics reflecting the good progress made during Key Stage 1. Good progress continues throughout the school so that by the end of Year 6 children are reaching high standards that are well above the national average in all subjects. Results in science are exceptionally good. All groups of learners achieve well. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make particularly good progress

due to the excellent support they receive in school. Where particular groups of children are seen to under-achieve, the school immediately provides alternative approaches to remedy this. For example, more is now done to motivate boys when they are writing and their work has improved considerably. The more able children in Key Stage 1 are now more challenged and the most recent results show considerable improvement for that group. Standards in other subjects are generally good because teachers plan systematically.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development is outstanding. They describe how much they enjoy coming to the school, although many of them say they would like more visits. Their attitudes and behaviour in classrooms and around the school are excellent. Children feel safe and secure and are confident to approach adults if they have any problems or difficulties. Attendance is slightly higher than the national average for primary schools and punctuality is good. Children take full advantage of the range of opportunities provided for them to enhance personal development. A good example of this is the way that older children like to take responsibility for the well-being of younger ones. They accompany them around school and play with them during break times with great care and consideration. Children show respect for each other and to adults and express their opinions with increasing confidence in a very supportive environment. As a result, their independence and self-esteem are high and many display a far greater maturity than would be expected for their age. The excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is the result of firm foundations provided by skilled teaching and non-teaching staff. A range of cultural activities, such as a visiting Chinese delegation and links with a school in Malaysia, help children to understand and talk about diversity. Children reflect sensitively on spiritual issues and Year 6 wrote, planned and delivered their own liturgy with great pride and sensitivity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Some lessons have outstanding features. Children's positive attitudes also contribute significantly to the high levels of learning. In the Foundation Stage children enjoy choosing different activities. Staff work well together as a team to provide creative and challenging opportunities. They make sure that the activities are great fun which means the children enjoy learning and want to take part. For example, singing along to a jazzy CD not only held their concentration but also helped their learning of rhyme and rhythm. Throughout the school lessons have a brisk pace and adults have high expectations of all children. For example Year 4 and 5 children said that their teacher's questioning at the start of the lesson really

helped them to 'get in the mood for maths!' In the most effective lessons excitement and action make a big difference to children's learning. For example a Year 6 drama lesson on Macbeth enthralled the children with costumes, glowing cauldron and stage fights. Information and communication technology (ICT) is integrated well into learning activities as was seen in a very effective Year 1 science lesson where children were working and concentrating independently on different programs. Teachers and support staff work well together to provide high levels of effective support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has well developed systems for assessing and recording standards and progress in English, mathematics and science. Work is regularly marked but the quality of this is inconsistent. Not all teachers provide sufficient guidance for individuals on how they might improve their work next time.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. The children's learning is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage promotes a positive atmosphere for good learning although outdoor provision is limited. The school works well to get round this and plans are also in place for the development of the playground. The provision for English, mathematics and ICT provides pupils with very effective basic skills for life. Good links are made between these subjects and other areas of the curriculum in most classes. For example, Year 3 and 4 children were enjoying using their reference skills to find out more about frogs. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good through the work of the well-trained support staff. Partnerships with the local community, including high schools, provide opportunities for enrichment. For example, the children enjoyed listening to staff from a major national supermarket chain talk about healthy foods and remembered what they were taught. Recent improvements to buildings have been planned with learning in mind. Year 2 children were working very well in the hall in a PE lesson where they talked enthusiastically about each other's sequences.

Pupils enjoy and learn a great deal from activities such as the visit to the Whitworth Art Gallery which clearly had an impact on their excellent charcoal drawings. Likewise, visitors to classrooms really help to bring the learning alive. However, some opportunities for enrichment are missed and some parents and children feel they would benefit from more experiences outside the classrooms.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. All staff are totally committed to providing the very best for these children. They work hard to promote high levels of health and safety. The school provides a safe environment with clear boundaries and many support systems for children. Arrangements for safeguarding are rigorous. Children feel they can talk to staff about anything and they say that adults in schools help them a lot with their work. A variety of reward systems give them a real boost and a sense of what has been achieved. Teachers and support staff spend a lot of time explaining

work and how to put things right when the pupils have not understood. They go over work again so that the learning becomes very secure. The school believes strongly in building firm foundations, especially in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The school works well with parents, particularly those of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to ensure that they are gaining the very most out of school. Learners that are at risk of falling behind are identified very early on so that the maximum support can be provided. This is monitored very thoroughly and parents kept well informed. Good information is provided for parents and carers including special evening workshops to help them understand different aspects of their children's education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding; as a result, the school has a very good capacity to improve. This is demonstrated by the excellent outcomes for all children. The headteacher is superbly well organised and keeps a close eye on everything that goes on. Her expectations of children and staff set extremely high standards for work and behaviour. There is a very caring and supportive atmosphere throughout the school. Teaching and non-teaching staff work effectively as a team and communication is very good. Changes and developments are always focused on raising standards. For example, the recent extensive building work has already had a positive impact on PE and ICT. School improvement planning is thorough. All stakeholders are consulted, for example through questionnaires, in order to evaluate how the school is doing. However, opportunities are missed to combine the management of school evaluation and school improvement in ways that could reduce bureaucracy. Teachers act efficiently to coordinate areas of the curriculum but the progression of skills of foundation subjects is not always systematically planned for and tracked. Governors are extremely supportive of the school and are not afraid to challenge. They have clear expectations of the headteacher and set demanding targets for school improvement. Performance of all staff is monitored regularly but actions points are not always set for individual teachers. Partnerships with other professional agencies such as the behaviour support team are good and lead to better outcomes for the children. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school although there are limited opportunities for them to help out with activities during the school day.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much indeed for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. Mrs Maloney and I really enjoyed our two days of inspecting because you were all so helpful and kind. We are very grateful.

We think that St Philip's is an excellent school. Mrs Singleton and the other adults are always planning new ways to help you learn. The teachers are good at teaching. Right from the start they help you learn well. In Reception you were really enjoying your activities and concentrating very well. In the other classes, we also saw lots of good learning. In some cases it was fantastic, like the Year 5 and 6 pretending to fight in the hall in their work on Macbeth! Those of you who find learning a bit hard get lots of help so that you can really make excellent progress. You tell us that you enjoy school and we saw that you have very positive attitudes to lessons. You love going on trips because this helps you learn, but we think you could go out of school even more. You are such sensible children at St Philip's. We like the way you behave well and take care of each other.

There are three things that we think will make the school even better.

- Firstly, we would like the teachers to make sure that you are reaching the very highest levels you can in subjects that you are not tested in (like music, art and geography).
- Secondly, we would like your teachers to involve you more in thinking and talking about your next steps for learning.
- Thirdly, we have asked Mrs Singleton to think about how she and the teachers might link up some of their meetings and planning to save them time.

We hope that you will all continue to work as hard as you are so that your wonderful school becomes even better. We send our very best wishes to you all for a happy and successful future.