



St John's CofE Infant School, Leigh

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106517
LEA Wigan
Inspection number 277581
Inspection dates 8 May 2006 to 9 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Colin Smith CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Kirkhall Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Leigh
Age range of pupils	5 to 7		Lancashire WN7 1RY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01942 672825
Number on roll	124	Fax number	01942 776624
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs M Pendlebury
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs L Worthington

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St John's C of E is a small infant school that serves a mixed community. The proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are average. However, the socio-economic circumstances locally are below average and pupils' attainment on entry is below that expected for their age. The vast majority of pupils are white British heritage. There are small groups from a range of black, Chinese and mixed heritages. A very small number are at an early stage of learning English. St John's was designated as a Beacon school three years ago.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an excellent school that provides exceptionally good value for money and is held in extremely high regard by parents. The staff and governors' understanding of the school's effectiveness is largely accurate, although their modest judgements about the curriculum, leadership and achievement reflect the conviction that there is always more to do. For example, the need to strengthen elements of satisfactory teaching to emulate the outstanding example set in the majority of year groups has been correctly identified and is underway. The school has built very effectively on the previous inspection and the continual search for excellence illustrates its outstanding capacity to improve. All groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties, the gifted and talented and those learning English as an additional language, make excellent progress overall. This begins in the Reception classes, where the quality of provision is excellent. Highly effective teaching enables most children to reach and many to exceed the learning goals expected for their age. Standards in English and mathematics, by the end of Year 2, have been much higher than the national averages for the last four years. However, pupils' skills at scientific investigation are not so high. Pupils' personal development flourishes and they grow in confidence because of the excellent care and guidance that the school provides.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers always build effectively on what pupils say to raise the elements of satisfactory teaching to that of the best.
- Improve pupils' investigation skills in science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. The improving trend from 2001 to 2004 was due to setting very challenging targets. The apparent decline in standards in 2005 reflected a larger group of pupils with learning difficulties in the cohort than is usually the case. Many of these pupils started school with knowledge and skills significantly lower than expected for their age. Nevertheless, they made excellent progress. By the end of Year 2 standards were above average in reading and mathematics and even higher in writing, which had been the school's focus for improvement.

Children make an excellent start in the Foundation Stage and many of them exceed the goals expected in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception year.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make particularly good progress, reflecting the high quality of learning support provided. Gifted and talented pupils make exceptional progress, largely because of outstanding teaching in the Year 2 class. In recent years, the progress made by pupils just above the learning difficulty level, often boys, had not been as good as that of other groups. In response, additional support has been provided and the outcomes carefully analysed. Pupils currently in

this category have all made at least a year's progress in eight months, and standards in Year 2 are very high overall. Although pupils' knowledge and understanding of science is good, their skills of investigation are not at the same level.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. Their spiritual, moral and social development is exemplary. Consequently, they have the confidence to speak out for what they believe to be right and show genuine concern for others. Pupils are immensely proud of their school. When asked they say, 'lessons are fun, we are all friends and there is no bullying here'. Their attitudes to learning and behaviour are first class. Attendance is usually average. The 2005 figure fell below this level because of extended absences of a few pupils who spent long periods in hospital. Attendance is above average this year because improvement incentives are working well. Exclusions are unheard of. The school is successful in preparing pupils for the future. They respond enthusiastically to responsibilities, for example as school council members and playtime assistants. Many children show maturity beyond their years, for example in the way Reception children learn independently and all pupils work together harmoniously. Pupils develop an excellent awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles, staying safe and when to say 'No.' Through many visits and out of school projects, they make a good contribution to the local community, not least in helping to arrange fetes, where they make and sell gifts.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and frequently outstanding in Reception and Year 2. Pupils are very well managed. The calm and purposeful learning atmosphere encourages pupils to give of their best. The presentation of their written work is exemplary. Teachers make precise assessments of pupils' learning and use the information very effectively to identify where additional support or a higher level of challenge is required. These measures significantly enhance the achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the gifted and talented ones. Pupils work with concentration and self-assurance because they know what they are expected to learn and the tasks provided are tailored closely to their different learning needs. Lessons are taught at a good pace and are usually very stimulating. There is no time for pupils to drift or become bored. Where teaching is outstanding, pupils are expected to tackle complex ideas and make substantial leaps in understanding. To achieve this, teachers question them shrewdly to probe their understanding and make them think. Crucially, pupils' answers are highly valued and often the springboard into new learning. On the infrequent occasions where teaching is only satisfactory, pupils' comments are not built on as skilfully, therefore their understanding is not as secure.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum that pupils find highly motivating. Its impact on their learning is constantly reviewed. For example, the exciting Foundation Stage curriculum is being extended into Year 1 for children who are still at the stage of learning through play. Gifted and talented pupils thrive on the high level of challenge. Similarly, the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully met. As one parent commented, 'I could not think of anything more the school could do to improve the education for my child.' The impressive range of additional enrichment activities is a key factor in pupils' excellent personal development. An extremely good personal, social and health education programme ensures that pupils learn to look after themselves and avoid dangers. Radical improvements in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) have raised achievement in the subject. However, although pupils learn science practically, the activities are not sequenced sufficiently well to ensure that they become skilled investigators.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding level of care, guidance and support for its pupils. This is the foundation upon which pupils' excellent personal development and achievement is built. Rigorous procedures for health and safety including child protection encompass all aspects of school life. This ensures that pupils' safety is paramount. Excellent links are forged with parents from the first day. As a result, pupils' needs are very well understood and monitored closely. Pupils who are vulnerable or not making enough progress are identified very quickly. Senior and support staff have established highly effective links with outside agencies. These measures ensure that pupils are safeguarded and barriers to learning are successfully removed. The guidance pupils receive is excellent. Their written work is marked impeccably and very precise targets are set to bring about further improvement. Consequently, pupils know exactly where they are on the ladder of learning and how to move up to the next rung.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The headteacher's excellent leadership skills are widely recognised. Very effective and equally committed support from the deputy headteacher and advanced skills teachers provides an extremely strong management team. Despite the school's many successes, there is no hint of complacency. The desire to provide the very best for pupils and their parents fuels the school's excellent capacity for further improvement. Significant strides have been made since the previous inspection in the organisation of the curriculum and the increasing influence of subject leaders. As a result, standards have continued to rise, particularly in ICT. School performance is rigorously evaluated by observing lessons, examining pupils' work and analysing the results they achieve. Governors play an

important part in the process, so are able to offer good support in holding the school to account. This is a school where every child matters. The way they are looked after and safeguarded is exemplary and there is an unremitting drive to extend the learning and personal development of every child. Very selective recruitment and effective staff training have led to an impressive level of teamwork, where less experienced teachers learn quickly and soon perform at high levels. Strategic planning is firmly rooted in an accurate picture of the key priorities and influenced by the views of parents, children and staff. Despite the large budget surplus, accumulated from savings to provide much needed additional teaching space, resources are carefully targeted toward improvement.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for talking to me, answering my questions and trying so hard to show what you can do. You were so friendly, helpful and polite that I greatly enjoyed my visit. You are right to be proud. Your school is excellent in almost every way.

Most of all, I noticed how well your headteacher, teachers and helpers look after, care for and help you. This keeps you safe and you do not have to worry about anything. I think this may be why you all behave beautifully.

Your teachers work so hard to make your lessons interesting and I can see just how much you enjoy learning. This is probably why you make such excellent progress and your work is of such a high standard.

Mrs Worthington thought that I had chosen a bad time to visit. I thought so too when the fire alarm went off in assembly. Amongst all the building work, you just carried on as normal. This shows just how well the headteacher and staff make sure the school runs smoothly no matter what happens.

Your parents and teachers trust each other and are good friends. I think this really helps you to make the most of your time at school.

There is not much I could ask your school to improve but I will try. Your teachers usually listen carefully to what you say to find out what you know and help you to learn more. I would like this to happen in every lesson.

You seem to like science but I think your learning would be even better if your teachers helped you to find out more for yourselves.

Please keep on trying your best and carry on helping your teachers and each other just as you did when I visited.