



St Edward's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111319
LEA Halton
Inspection number 278653
Inspection dates 28 September 2005 to 29 September 2005
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	Wivern Place
School category	Voluntary aided		Runcorn
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Cheshire WA7 1RZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01928 572317
Number on roll	99	Fax number	01928 576034
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs A Farrell
Date of previous inspection	20 September 1999	Headteacher	Mrs J Lawrence

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

St Edwards is a small Catholic Primary School near the centre of Runcorn, although some children attending live outside the locality. The immediate area is socially disadvantaged, hence the school provides family learning facilities and qualifies for support through national projects. The percentage of children eligible for free school meals is twice the national average, although the percentage with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average. Virtually all of the children are white and all of them speak English. The school gained an Achievement Award in 2003 and has been awarded Investors in People status. More recently, it achieved the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Edwards is a successful school with outstanding features. It provides good value for money. Staff and governors correctly judge the school to be good and are accurate in their assessment that leadership and management are outstanding. Central to the school's work is the constant search for excellence, which fuels its considerable capacity for improvement. Consequently, some areas that the school originally judged to be good, such as children's personal development and care provided, are now outstanding. Links with outside agencies are highly beneficial in providing an exemplary level of care. The quality of teaching and learning are good with examples of excellent teaching, particularly in Year 5/6. A rich and interesting curriculum caters well for children's different needs.

The moment children enter the reception class their learning begins to accelerate in response to very good provision. By the end of the reception year, the vast majority achieves the standards expected for their age. Children continue to make good progress throughout the school. Consequently, by the time they complete Year 6, standards are significantly higher than average overall. The standards achieved and quality of teaching and learning have improved well since the previous inspection. Standards in writing and information and communication technology (ICT) have been raised and the provision in music improved. The school was also required to improve the progress of more able children, which it has largely done. However, there are still occasions when these children could achieve even more by teachers setting demanding challenges for them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the more able children are provided with challenging tasks in all lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Staff and governors' accurate view that children achieve well is based on meticulous assessment of learning. This enables challenging targets to be set and reached. Children's standards on entry to school are broadly typical for their age, although often lower in their social and language development, especially amongst boys. Children in the reception class make particularly good progress in these areas and boys gradually catch up. High quality support helps children who find learning difficult make very good progress throughout the school.

Infant and junior age children make good progress and achieve significantly higher than average standards in English, mathematics and science overall by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Although standards in Year 2 were broadly average in 2005, the children had started from a lower level of attainment. Junior children's progress in English, particularly writing, has previously lagged behind mathematics and science. Moreover, more able children have not always achieved as well as they should. A determined

effort to improve children's writing led to a substantial increase in the percentage reaching higher levels in English in 2005. That said, there is scope to promote even better progress for the more able children in some lessons. Children use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills well to extend their learning in other subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development is outstanding, even better than the school had judged it to be. The ethos and relationships within the school are excellent. Children's self esteem and confidence, regarded as essential to successful learning, are impressively nurtured. Children are guided skilfully to understand themselves and make the right choices. They have a remarkably mature understanding of the needs of others and show a high degree of sensitivity and support. As a result, behaviour in and around school is very good and parents and children comment on the peaceful atmosphere and absence of bullying.

Lessons are interesting and children's achievement is quickly recognised and rewarded. This impacts profoundly on their enjoyment of school, which is outstanding. Attendance is well above average and punctuality is good. Within the Catholic family ethos, children's spiritual, moral and social development are exemplary. Their awareness of cultures other than their own is adequate and they regard racism as totally unacceptable. Children's sense of personal and social responsibility is extremely well developed. School council activities and numerous links with the local community very successfully promote children's understanding and respect for their environment and they acquire an acute awareness of healthy lifestyles and personal safety. In these respects, children gain essential skills and knowledge that will help them to face the challenges of growing up.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning are good, as the school rightly asserts. The basis of the successful teaching is rooted in excellent assessment of children's learning. For example, accurately targeted support from effective classroom assistants enables children with learning difficulties to achieve their targets successfully.

The climate for learning is always good. Children try their best and derive enjoyment from their lessons. This was evident in the delight on the new reception children's faces when they saw projected photographs taken of themselves on pre-school visits. One child excitedly exclaimed, "That's me, but my hair was shorter then!" Children know exactly what they are expected to learn and benefit greatly from teachers' clear explanations and probing questions, which make them think. Regular practise at home helps them to improve.

In outstanding lessons, children become totally absorbed and cannot wait to write down their ideas, for example when playing the roles of reporters in Year 5/6 or testing different brands of toothpaste in science in Year 3/4. In most lessons, the needs of the more able children are fully taken into account. However, on a few occasions they have to complete the work set for the rest of the class before moving on to more challenging activities. They learn more quickly when demanding tasks are provided from the outset.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum, as staff and governors believe. It meets statutory requirements. The curriculum is adapted very well to cater for the needs of children with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school is now developing the curriculum further to provide for children who have special gifts and talents. The good range of out-of-school activities already plays an important part in this.

The diversity of the curriculum has increased considerably since the previous inspection. Children now learn French and Spanish and more are learning to play musical instruments. Encouragement to use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills has brought children's independent learning skills up to a good level. Local artists are frequent visitors to the school and many community projects are underway, which enhance environmental awareness, understanding of personal safety and economic well-being. Several children serve on planning committees with local authority personnel to control litter, plan safe journeys to school and develop conservation sites. The school has achieved a Healthy Schools Award in recognition of children's very good understanding of the importance of diet and exercise.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided are outstanding and at the heart of children's good achievement and exceptional personal development. In this school every child matters. From the moment children enter school their personal and emotional development are exceptionally well nurtured. To achieve this, the school has built very productive relationships with parents and agencies involved in childcare. The headteacher is highly effective in co-ordinating the work of learning mentors, social workers and child protection officers. Considerable expertise is focused on dismantling barriers to children's learning and social development. Responsible adults are welcomed into children's homes, where concerns can be quickly identified and support provided.

The school provides very successful learning opportunities in personal, social, health and citizenship education. Consequently, children are very aware of dangers they may encounter, ranging from meeting strangers to the hazards of drugs and traffic. Security and safety are paramount and backed up by rigorous risk assessments. The guidance offered to children is first-class. Accurate assessments of their progress are converted into meaningful targets for improvement: children know exactly where they stand and what they need to do next.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding, precisely in line with the school's evaluation. The excellent leadership provided by the headteacher is clearly demonstrated in the personal responsibility she takes to ensure that each child's learning is checked meticulously and strategies for improvement devised where learning appears to falter. This ensures that children make good progress. The process applies equally to children's outstanding personal development and well-being. It is this high level of effectiveness that enables a judgement of outstanding leadership and management to be made.

Individual subject leaders play a vital part in school improvement by closely checking work in their subjects and providing plans to strengthen particular aspects. Teamwork, the very high quality of performance management and staff training and excellent communications lead to a consistency of approach in which all children's learning and development flourishes.

There is no hint of complacency in this well regarded school. The search for excellence goes on, reflecting a marked capacity for self-improvement. The very good improvements made since the previous inspection are evident in higher standards, particularly in writing and ICT, and in better provision in several areas, such as music and children's independent learning.

Excellent co-ordination of the work of staff and external agencies has led to outstanding levels of childcare and children's exemplary personal development. The school's previous budget surplus has been significantly reduced to ensure that small class sizes are maintained and additional support staff employed. Parents regarded these factors as very influential in their children's learning. Governors provide good support and ensure that resources are prudently deployed, enabling the school to provide good value for money.

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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?	2	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	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	1	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	1	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?	2	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	2	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

I very much enjoyed my visit to your school. Thank you for answering my questions and helping me to gather information. I am pleased to tell you that your school is a good one, just as you thought. The best things about your school are:

- Your sensible and caring attitudes to learning and towards each other
- The good teaching, which helps you to learn successfully and achieve high standards.
- The excellent way in which the headteacher works with staff, governors and people outside school to provide the very best education and care for you

Your school is getting better all the time and very few improvements are needed. However, there are occasions when the more able children have to complete work set for the rest of the class before they can get onto more challenging tasks. It would help their learning if they were given the harder work straight away.