



St Theresa's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111388
LEA Cheshire
Inspection number 278677
Inspection dates 3 April 2006 to 4 April 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Mark Madeley CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Kipling Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Blacon
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Chester, Cheshire CH1 5UU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01244 390758
Number on roll	224	Fax number	01244 370718
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr B Larkin
Date of previous inspection	28 September 1998	Headteacher	Mr M Forber

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school which serves an area of high social-economic deprivation. Virtually all children are of white British heritage. About one in four children have free school meals and this is above average. More than 25% of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is above average. There is a greater concentration of these children in some year groups, for instance, in Year 6.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Theresa's provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. One parent wrote, 'My daughter just loves to go to school every day,' which reflects this picture. Children's achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. They are better than they were in 2003 because teaching is more effective. Rigorous monitoring has improved the quality of teaching significantly. However, too little focus has been given to children's learning in lessons and sometimes they do not make as much progress as they could, particularly in writing. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The school has a satisfactory knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses but judges itself to be good which is too optimistic at this stage. Systems to measure children's progress are in place but there remain weaknesses in assessment. However, the good leadership of the headteacher and strong teamwork have moved the school forward. It therefore has good capacity to improve further. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. From a very low starting point children make good progress, but few reach the standards for their age by the end of Reception class. The information on children's standards in the Foundation Stage in 2005 was inaccurate and gave management a false picture of children's progress. The school makes good provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and as a result, they achieve well.

Children's personal development is good. They enjoy school, though the attendance of a minority is unsatisfactory. Behaviour is good and they know simple ways of staying safe, fit and healthy. The school works very effectively with the local high school, support agencies and other local schools to the benefit of all children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that children's standards in the Foundation Stage are accurately assessed.
- Improve children's attendance by continuing to analyse data to identify and work with the minority who do not attend well.
- Evaluate the impact of teaching on children's learning more closely so as to improve children's progress, particularly in writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress, overall. Most of them join the school with low standards. Effective teaching in Foundation Stage helps children gain confidence, particularly with letter sounds. Despite this good progress, they do not meet the standards expected in most areas of learning and their writing skills, in particular, are very weak. Children make steady progress in Key Stage 1. In the 2005 national tests, standards rose in relation to previous years and were broadly average. Despite the school's efforts to improve it, writing remains a weakness.

In 2003, Year 6 test results had dipped to below average. In 2005, Year 6 pupils made outstanding progress in relation to their performance in Year 2, thanks to a concerted effort by all staff. They had good continuity of teaching through Years 5 and 6 and this helped them exceed their challenging targets. Their results in the national tests were broadly average and halted the downward trend in the school's standards since 2001. The current Year 6 pupils are hampered by gaps in their learning caused by staff absence when they were in Year 5. For many writing skills are particularly weak. However, they are now making steady progress and are likely to meet the challenging targets set for them. The school knows that boys achieve less well than girls and has put in place sound measures to improve boys' achievement.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are effectively analysed and they receive good support from classroom assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The inspection team agrees with the school that children's personal development is good. Children are friendly, co-operate well and are keen to take on responsibility, such as the 'playground and lunchtime buddies'. Children behave and relate to each other well. They like school and are generally keen to learn. They know how to stay safe, for instance when using the Internet or crossing the road. They also know a great deal about how to stay fit and healthy. They are adequately prepared well for the next stage in their schooling because they have a positive attitude to learning.

Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Children learn to talk about their feelings and about the wonders of God's world. They support the school community by being sensible and those on the school council take their responsibilities very seriously. They also support those less well off than themselves, for example, by choosing to raise funds for people in Kenya.

The majority of children attend well and are punctual. However, attendance is unsatisfactory because a minority of parents persist in keeping their children out of school for unauthorised reasons. The school is working hard to address this issue and is beginning to have some success. Pupils develop sound basic skills which provide an adequate basis for their future learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features. Effective management has improved teaching technique since the last inspection, but more emphasis now needs to be placed on checking children's learning to help them make quicker progress. In the Foundation Stage good teaching enables children to make rapid progress in their personal and physical development and enjoy their learning. Children have also made good progress in learning letter sounds since a new teaching

method has been introduced. In Key Stages 1 and 2 teaching has improved and is often good, because it is well planned and tasks meet children's learning needs. Occasionally, children do not understand how to complete the task and so learn little in the lesson. Some children, particularly older ones, have gaps in their learning and lack confidence in their literacy skills because staffing difficulties in the past have affected their learning. Teachers are now working hard to overcome these barriers to children's progress.

Assessment information is used adequately to set challenging targets. However, teacher assessments for 2005 in the Foundation Stage are inaccurate and do not give an accurate picture of children's progress. Children are becoming confident in assessing their learning. Teachers' marking is good quality and helps children know what to do to improve their work. Support assistants provide a high level of effective support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the needs of the learners. The school uses the national guidance for teaching literacy and numeracy well and this has improved children's standards in these subjects. The Foundation Stage curriculum is adequate, but planning does not make sufficient use of areas outside the classroom for children to develop their creative and independence skills. The school has concentrated on the basic skills in English, mathematics and science so has not yet tackled how they might be practised fully in other subjects. The good personal, social and health education and citizenship programme is having a positive impact on children's behaviour and attitudes. The school offers a good range of clubs and visits to stimulate children's imaginations. The recent visit of a university representative showed children that higher education is attainable if they continue to work hard.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school places a very high priority on keeping children safe. Procedures for safeguarding and protecting children are in place and they help children understand how to keep themselves safe. The school successfully promotes children's understanding of a healthy lifestyle. Good induction procedures ensure that they are well prepared for starting school and make a smooth transfer into the secondary school.

The school has successfully involved children in assessing their own learning and this is beginning to have a marked impact on their ability to improve their work. Children's progress is assessed satisfactorily and suitable learning targets are set. These measures are improving children's progress, but children are not yet making consistently good progress through the school because they have gaps in their learning and monitoring systems are relatively new.

The school supports the needs of the most vulnerable children well. Staff work well with agencies and with parents to enable children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress in relation to their capabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has come a long way since the last inspection because the staff and governors have worked exceptionally well as a team to improve all aspects of school life. 'The headteacher's management has been very dynamic,' wrote one parent, confirming the views of them all. Leadership at all levels has improved the quality of teaching, which has improved children's rate of progress from inadequate to satisfactory. This has raised standards from their very low levels in 2003. Other issues from the previous inspection have also been successfully tackled and on this evidence, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

The school has an adequate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, though evaluation of Foundation Stage information lacks rigour. Teaching technique has been monitored closely and is often good, but its impact on children's learning has not been evaluated closely enough so as to identify children's progress in lessons. The school has satisfactory systems to gauge children's progress and to identify children who need additional support. They are relatively new and so management cannot easily judge children's progress over the longer-term. The subject leaders have a clear picture of what needs to be done to improve further because they use test information very well. The management of the provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good and is sometimes used as a model of good practice for other schools. The school values every child equally and works very hard to ensure that they all reach their potential. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is very well led and has improved considerably. Governors are highly supportive of the school and are becoming more effective in holding the school to account.

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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	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	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	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	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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 very much for your warm welcome when we came to look at your school recently. We value your contribution and really enjoyed talking to you. We think that your school has improved a great deal in a short time, thanks to the dedication of the headteacher and his staff, and is now a school you can be proud of. Teaching is often good and this helps you improve further. Your standards in English, mathematics and science are better now than they were two years ago.

It is clear that both you and your parents like the school very much. Around the school and in classes you behave well and are keen to learn. For most children attendance is good but for a few your parents take you out of school too often and you miss out on learning. You know a lot about staying safe and healthy and were very pleased to receive your raffle tickets from the school council as a reward for bringing a healthy snack to school!

Your school has improved a great deal, but there is more to do. You can help your school by continuing to be keen to learn and always doing your best. These are the things we have asked the school to do to make it a better place to learn:

- continue to improve your attendance
- make sure that the school checks assessments, especially in Reception classes
- check how well you are learning in lessons so that your progress improves.

We would like to thank you and all the adults in the school for being so helpful to us. We enjoyed our short stay very much and wish you and your school well for the future.