



# St John's Catholic Primary School, Skelmersdale

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 119586  
**LEA** Lancashire  
**Inspection number** 280603  
**Inspection dates** 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Kathleen McArthur

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Flamstead
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Birch Green
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		Skelmersdale, Lancashire
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01695 721323
<b>Number on roll</b>	197	<b>Fax number</b>	01695 727589
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Cath Ainscow
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 January 2001	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Angela Aspinwall-Livesey

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 23 November 2005 - 24 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 280603
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors

## Description of the school

This average-sized primary school serves an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage, as is reflected in the large number of children who receive free school meals. The children come from a broad social mix of families, almost all of White British heritage. An unusually large number join or leave the school during the year. When pupils start in the nursery, their attainment is well below what is typical for their age. An above-average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties. The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Investors in People status and most of the Healthy Schools Award. As a full service-extended school, it provides before and after school care, holiday clubs and family support. Its facilities are used by the local community.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. Inspectors confirm the school's own view of how effective it is, but also identify some features that are outstanding. Pupils' personal development and the way the school cares for them are both outstanding. Inspirational leadership by the headteacher has created a vibrant environment at the heart of the community. She is ably supported by the strong senior leadership team. Excellent links with outside agencies provide extended services and guidance for pupils and their families. Governance is good, and the governors know the school well. Pupils and their families are welcomed as partners in the learning process, and are highly satisfied with the school. Children make a good start to school in the Foundation Stage. They progress well but few reach or exceed the standards expected by the end of reception. Although standards are below national averages, good teaching ensures pupils achieve well throughout the school. The curriculum is good and pupils really enjoy learning. The school makes great efforts to involve them all in the wide variety of activities, and actively seeks their opinions and ideas on all aspects of school life. Attendance is below the national average.

Previous weaknesses in information and communication technology (ICT), design technology and pupils' knowledge of life in a multi-cultural society have been successfully overcome. Standards in English, mathematics and ICT still need to be improved, and the school has developed a range of rigorous strategies to achieve this. Staff, governors and pupils show a strong will and a good capacity for further improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Continue the drive to raise standards in mathematics and English, particularly in writing.
- Extend the existing systems to improve attendance.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Children start school with standards well below those typical for their age, particularly in the vital area of language. Good teaching and well-planned activities in the happy surroundings of the nursery and Reception class ensure they make good progress, but few reach or exceed the goals expected at the end of reception. All pupils achieve well throughout the school in relation to their different starting points and capabilities, because they are taught well and benefit from the wide range of curricular activities. However, they do not reach the standards expected in English and mathematics by the time they leave the school. In English, standards in writing are much lower than in reading. The decline in overall standards in recent years is due in part to the above-average number of pupils with learning difficulties and the increasingly high number of pupils who enter or leave the school during the year.

The school has developed further initiatives to raise standards. Progress is rigorously monitored to set targets that challenge pupils, and to find out where to provide extra help to enable them to do better. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, because carefully planned learning activities and knowledgeable teaching assistants support them well. The more able pupils also achieve consistently well. In ICT, standards are still below expected levels, but they have improved significantly since the previous inspection because of better provisions.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development, behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are excited by their learning. Parents say, 'There are lots of great and fun activities for the children to join in with.' Pupils are polite and well mannered. They willingly take on responsibilities and are proud of their contribution to the school and wider community. They speak enthusiastically about the improvements made through the class and school councils. Pupils respond well to the needs of others and care for their environment through litter-picking and recycling activities. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their learning about different religions and cultures is seen particularly well in the effective art displays. They show great respect for ideas and beliefs that are different from their own. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles, and the benefits of healthy eating and regular exercise. Their excellent personal and social skills, together with improving basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT, prepare them adequately for the next stage of their education and the world of work. Attendance is below the national average because of the persistent non-attendance of a small number of families and holidays taken during the summer term. However, the majority of pupils attend regularly and on time.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils say lessons are interesting and fun and their teachers are 'brill'. They enjoy the good range of practical activities planned for them, for example during the health and multi-cultural weeks. Teachers' clear explanations and effective questioning draw on pupils' earlier learning and challenge them further. Good use of ICT supports learning by really engaging pupils' interest so that they concentrate well in lessons. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and behave well. They use praise very effectively to motivate pupils and build up their self-esteem. As a result, they try their best at all times. Teaching is rigorously monitored and outcomes shared in the drive to improve learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by knowledgeable teaching assistants and by carefully prepared individual education plans. They make good progress and achieve to the best of their capabilities. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are

good. Staff use the information gathered from observing and assessing pupils' work to plan new learning that successfully builds on what they already know and can do. However, marking is not yet used consistently to tell pupils how to improve their work. Pupils are clear about their learning targets and are becoming increasingly involved in assessing their own learning.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and meets all statutory requirements. It is planned well to match learners' different needs, and it provides a good range of interesting, practical learning activities. Work for the children in the Foundation Stage is planned effectively to link different subjects. For example, children count whilst acting the story of the three Billy Goats. Although provision for basic skills is good, and ICT is widely used as a tool for learning, standards are below average in these areas. Activities for pupils with learning difficulties are planned effectively so that they learn well. Able and talented pupils participate in special activities designed to give them greater challenges. Spanish is taught to one class, and some parents took lessons in order to help their children. Outside lessons, pupils say they enjoy the good range of sports clubs and visits, the residential visit and the themed weeks. Pupils asked for the ICT club. The thriving brass band is also open to the local community. All these out-of-class activities contribute well to pupils' achievement and personal development, including their ability to keep healthy and stay safe.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school provides an outstanding level of care, support and guidance. Procedures for child protection and all other risk assessments are very securely in place. Excellent links with specialist staff and extended services ensure pupils' particular needs are very well provided for. Staff know pupils and their families very well. Excellent relationships throughout the school and the very extensive programmes for personal development contribute strongly to pupils' progress. They feel safe and secure and know who to turn to with problems or concerns. Consequently, they thrive within the calm, harmonious environment and say that one of the best things about their school is 'the happiness within it'. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully involved in all that the school offers. Very good induction procedures for all pupils, including home visits by nursery staff, help them settle quickly into school routines and move on. Pupils' progress is very carefully tracked throughout the school to ensure that guidance enables them to aim as high and to work as well as they can. Parents rightly feel very happy with the school's provision for care and welfare.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors confirm the school's view that leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher is inspirational. She maintains a very clear vision for school improvement within a secure Christian ethos. Her skills are recognised beyond the school. She is the driving force in combining a wide range of initiatives and extended services to create a vibrant school community in which pupils and their families are welcome, safe and valued. The strong and effective team of senior leaders provide well-informed guidance for staff and pupils. Subject managers carry out their roles effectively. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well and children make good progress in its safe, happy environment. Governance is good. Governors know the school well, help plan for improvement and confidently challenge and question decisions. Staff and governors share the commitment to higher standards and they work very effectively to promote equality of opportunity for all. Good evaluation procedures give an accurate picture of the school's performance. Reliable information from monitoring and assessment is used effectively to establish priorities for development and to fine-tune the plans to raise standards. The opinions of parents and pupils are regularly sought and always acted on. All resources are used well. The budget is rigorously monitored and the school gives good value for money. It is well prepared for further 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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	4	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	3	NA

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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

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25 November 2005

Dear Children

As you know, inspectors visited your school recently. Thank you very much for welcoming us in such a friendly way, and for being so helpful and polite when you talked to us. We would like you to know the main things that we found out:

your headteacher is outstanding and has worked very well with you, the staff, your parents and the governors to create a good school

your behaviour is excellent. You care for each other really well and told us that you enjoy learning because school is exciting and happy

you have good teachers and teaching assistants

your school has excellent arrangements to make sure you are safe and cared for very well.

There are two things that would help make your school even better:

it should find ways of helping you improve in English, especially in your writing, and in mathematics and ICT

it should work with your families to make sure you all come to school every day.

Thank you again for your help with the inspection. We hope you will continue working hard to help make your school an exciting place to learn.

Yours sincerely

Kathleen McArthur

Lead inspector

Annex B