



# St James' Catholic Primary School, Skelmersdale

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 119588  
**LEA** Lancashire  
**Inspection number** 280604  
**Inspection dates** 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Jennie Platt

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Ashurst Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Ashurst
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		Skelmersdale, Lancashire
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01695 728989
<b>Number on roll</b>	205	<b>Fax number</b>	01695 728989
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr John Sanders
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 October 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Pauline Irvine

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 23 November 2005 - 24 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 280604
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an average size voluntary aided Catholic primary school. It serves a very varied area including pockets of deprivation alongside more socially advantaged areas. The attainment of pupils starting school is broadly average. A lower than average number of pupils take free school meals. Similarly, very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and none of these requires help with English. A below average proportion of pupils have additional learning needs. Nursery provision organised by a management committee is available on site for 45 children. Plans are in place for the nursery to become part of the school and to establish a Foundation Stage Unit. The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This very caring and friendly school provides an acceptable quality of education with some good features. Whilst the inspection judgment is not as high as the school's own view, the inspection team acknowledges the improvement in Key Stage 2. Current standards are broadly average. Overall progress is satisfactory and accelerates in Years 5 and 6, where teaching is strongest. Higher attaining pupils are not making enough progress in Key Stage 1. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory with some good aspects. Children make steady progress and reach the standards expected by the end of the reception class. Support for pupils who have additional learning needs is good and they make good progress. Teaching and learning are satisfactory although assessment is not always used successfully to match work to pupils' ability. The curriculum is rich and extended by an excellent range of activities. The headteacher and staff show a determination to improve. Self-evaluation is developing but as yet subject leaders, managers and governors do not monitor rigorously enough to ensure accuracy in judgements. Most of the previous weaknesses have been resolved. The pending new nursery will overcome the lack of outdoor provision for pupils in the reception class. A more stable staffing situation means the school is well placed to move forward. Value for money is satisfactory.

not applicable

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement of higher attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by sharing the good practice seen.
- Use assessment information more effectively to match work to pupils' ability and to set pupils' targets which will help them to improve.
- Strengthen the monitoring role of subject leaders, managers and governors to ensure the school has a more accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

The school judges achievement to be good and this is apparent in the later stages of Key Stage 2 where standards are improving. However, overall achievement in the school is satisfactory because the school has a way to go to ensure progress is good throughout the school. Children start in the reception class with average skills. They make steady progress to reach the level expected by the time they start in Year 1. The emphasis on personal skills provides a firm base for learning. In Year 2, the results of national tests have been broadly average although they fell below this level in 2005. Learning for these pupils was disturbed by unavoidable staff changes which led to low test results. Current standards are closer to average, with reading being the strongest subject. Higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged and are underachieving. Progress accelerates in response to strong teaching in Years 5 and 6. An increasing number of pupils now exceed the level expected for their age. Current standards, based

on inspection evidence and the school's targets, are satisfactory. Targets set by the school are generally exceeded, but they are not always sufficiently challenging, given the pupils' previous performance. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress overall and are well supported in class.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are polite and enjoy school. The focus on pupils accepting responsibility for their own behaviour leads to good behaviour. Pupils work hard and enjoy carrying out investigations and working in a group. They show a genuine desire to help each other and this extends beyond the classroom as pupils help the needy both in the community and further afield. They apply their numeracy skills when working out their profits when fund raising. Pupils know the importance of keeping healthy and many keep fit by playing in school teams. Pupils are confident that staff will help if they have a problem and say they feel safe and secure. Attendance is satisfactory.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The Catholic ethos of the school means that children are respectful of others. They are aware that others have a different faith to their own but do not have an in-depth knowledge about life in a multi-cultural society. They are kind to each other and insist there is no harassment in their school. Pupils enjoy cultural events such as theatre visits and learning about famous artists.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. A strength in all lessons is the positive management of behaviour and variety of activities. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and settle quickly to work. A calm buzz of activity pervades this open plan school. Good teaching was observed in Years 5 and 6, where high expectations of pupils' performance are leading to improved progress. The challenge in these lessons is what distinguishes them from the satisfactory teaching and these skills need to be shared with other staff. The best lessons have a brisk pace but some are too slow because tasks are repeated and pupils' interest wanes. This is especially the case in Years 1 and 2, where assessment information is not being used successfully to match work to pupils' ability and this leads to a lack of challenge for the higher attaining pupils. In the Foundation Stage, the focus on encouraging independence and learning through practical activities provides a secure foundation for future learning. Occasionally, too many activities are planned for the small reception classroom and it is difficult for staff to interact with the children and extend the learning that is planned. Good planning for pupils with additional learning needs ensures tasks match their needs. Teaching assistants support these pupils very effectively and ensure they achieve success.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. It meets most pupils' needs well and ensures that learners enjoy their education. The Foundation Stage curriculum is firmly based on giving children first-hand experiences but the lack of a designated outside play area restricts the opportunities to use the outdoors to enrich the curriculum. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good. Additional group sessions for those needing an extra boost to their learning have a positive impact on standards in Key Stage 2. The school has not neglected pupils' creative and physical development. For example, music has a high profile and pupils are very enthusiastic about playing their musical instruments. Pupils also enjoy learning Spanish. Personal, social and health education provides clear information to enable pupils to become responsible citizens. The curriculum is enriched through an excellent range of after-school activities, particularly sport and games. Pupils look forward to visits and visitors, which contribute immensely to pupils' enjoyment and achievement.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school gives good attention to pupils' welfare and care. Staff have the very best interests of children at heart and check pupils are safe and happy. The school is very inclusive. Advice is regularly sought from external agencies to ensure pupils with additional learning needs receive the correct support.

Health and safety checks and risk assessments are carried out diligently and action taken when needed. Child protection procedures are good and the school is preparing to review them. Good attention is given to shaping pupils' attitudes to health and safety. Careful induction procedures ensure children settle quickly into school. Similarly, very close links ensure pupils move confidently to the local secondary school.

The school is including pupils more in their learning by setting them targets. The success of this system is variable because targets are not always expressed in child-friendly language and teachers do not refer to them enough in marking or lessons. As a result, pupils are not always clear how to check their own progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. This is not as high as the school's own judgment. Although management has successfully raised standards in Year 6 more remains to be done in the infants. The headteacher leads the school well and her infectious enthusiasm helps staff to overcome obstacles. The results of her efforts to gain a nursery as a full part of the school are now coming to fruition. The school's commitment to social inclusion is good. Parents are pleased with the education their children receive and are canvassed for their opinions.

The school accepts that its self-evaluation judgements were overgenerous. This was caused by too much focus on the improvements in Key Stage 2. The tracking of performance and teaching throughout the school have not been rigorous enough. Some inconsistencies in teaching show that monitoring is not always leading to changes that will lift standards. The leadership is clear how to improve the monitoring of performance and new tracking procedures are ready to be put in place. Subject leaders audit their subjects well and know what needs to be done. However, the lack of action plans makes it difficult to see how improvements are to be carried out or evaluated.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive and fulfil all their statutory duties. They focus on providing a varied curriculum and ensuring pupils' well-being. They need to further extend their collaboration with the leadership team in the critical analysis of the school.

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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>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	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>	2	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>	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

<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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St James' Catholic Primary School,  
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25 November 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We appreciated the friendly way you chatted to us and told us about your school.

We liked these things the most.

You told us you enjoy school and this is very clear in the way you try hard in lessons and behave well.

The school teaches you how to keep safe and healthy.

Staff provide an outstanding range of clubs and activities and you take advantage of these opportunities.

You care for each other and also raise lots of money for charities. You have collected a lot of boxes full of gifts to send abroad.

You told us you enjoy the variety of activities and we agree teachers provide you with a rich variety of experiences.

We have asked teachers to look at the following things to make your school even better.

Some pupils could make better progress in the infants.

We would like teachers to check that work is hard enough so that you are all making as much progress as possible.

You have got targets to improve your work. We would like these to be written in words that you can understand easily and for teachers to remind you of them so you have a clearer understanding of how to make your work even better.

We would like all involved in managing your school to keep a closer eye on how well the school is doing.

We wish you well for Christmas and the future. You will take with you many happy memories of your time at St. James' Catholic School.

Yours faithfully

Mrs J E Platt and Mr A Calderbank (Inspectors)

Annex B