

# St Paul's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105070
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wirral
<b>Inspection number</b>	287112
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mark Madeley

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	115
School	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs M Cook
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Margaret Jackson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 February 2003
<b>School address</b>	Farmfield Drive Beechwood Prenton Merseyside CH43 7TE
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 6527828
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 6539052

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a small school whose pupil numbers have remained stable since the last inspection at a time when they are falling in the area. The school's nursery has 20 children on roll and they generally start school just after their third birthday. The number of pupils in each year group is very small and this needs to be taken into account when analysing statistics on pupils' attainment. All pupils are of White British heritage. Two out of every three are eligible for free school meals, which is exceptionally high. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also exceptionally high. For example, in the Year 6 group which left school in the summer of 2006, eight out of the 11 pupils had some form of learning difficulty. The local authority had planned to close the school but on appeal this was turned down. Following a freeze on all new posts, because of the possibility of closure, permanent appointments of a headteacher and some teaching staff have been made, but the school still has two temporary staff in post. The school has achieved two national awards for its work on improving the curriculum. They are the Sports Activemark and 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 is a satisfactory school with good features. Senior managers have a very accurate view of what is happening in school from the thorough checking procedures, and this agrees completely with the inspection judgements. Effective management has secured pupils' progress despite the possibility of closure and the accompanying staffing difficulties. At the same time it has significantly improved attendance and the standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1. The good governing body has been a key element in the school's successes, providing high levels of support for the whole school community. They keep themselves well informed about the school and are always ready to ask 'why?' when managers suggest changes or when things are not going as well as planned. These aspects indicate that the school has good capacity to improve further. It gives satisfactory value for money.

Pupils love their school and speak to visitors and staff with confidence. They are keen to help in whatever way they can and raise funds for charities. The good school council gives them an opportunity to offer ideas to improve provision. These are carefully considered and often acted upon. Classes always receive feedback on developments. Pupils' behaviour is generally satisfactory, though some find it difficult to be on their best behaviour all the time in class. The many opportunities to exercise provided by the good curriculum are taken up by most pupils. They have a good understanding of what is not good for them, whether it be 'fatty' and 'sugary' foods or alcohol, smoking and drugs. The curriculum also promotes tolerance of other lifestyles very effectively, for example through the 'Live Simply' programme. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school because, 'we're all one big happy family' and staff know them all individually. They know that bullying of any kind is very rare and are confident that the staff would deal with it promptly and firmly.

When they start school children's skills are very low. Good provision in the Foundation Stage helps them make rapid progress, particularly in their personal development. However, despite effective teaching, children's language development is below national expectations when they enter Year 1 because they start from such a low point. Overall, pupils' achievement across the school is satisfactory, but their progress varies greatly between classes. In Key Stage 1 standards have risen to average in recent years. For the current Year 2 they are below average mainly because these pupils' writing skills are especially weak. By the end of Year 6 pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science is below average, with pupils' writing being a relative weakness. This represents adequate progress from their differing starting points, but this progress has not been uniform over their junior years. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but the amount of progress pupils make in each class is variable due to changing staffing arrangements.

Parents indicate that their children are very well cared for in school and the inspection confirms their view. This overwhelming vote of confidence in the school has been brought about by good links with parents, effective safeguarding measures and considered use of training for all staff. Senior managers have also very successfully reached out to parents to involve them in their child's education. For example, parents are now keen to accompany pupils on educational visits. Another impact of these initiatives has been the improvement over the last year in pupils' attendance and punctuality.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to that of the best so that pupils make the progress of which they are capable throughout Key Stage 2.
- Improve pupils' writing skills, particularly in Key Stage 1.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

On entry to school many children are unable to express themselves clearly. They know few traditional tales and rhymes and have had few opportunities to draw or paint. From this very low starting point they quickly improve because adults encourage their speech and provide many chances to learn through well structured play activities. Children join Year 1 having reached the national expectations for their age in most of the areas of learning but their language skills remain weak because, despite good teaching, they have too much ground to make up.

Test results at the end of Key Stage 1 have improved significantly in the last two years. Current standards are below average although this represents satisfactory progress for these pupils from their various starting points. Pupils find translating their ideas in to written work especially difficult and standards in writing are very low. Following a period of declining test results in Key Stage 2, caused partly by very high proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, more pupils are now reaching the average and higher levels. All pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 2 but it is not uniform. Through the school pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils enjoy school and are keen to come each day. They and their parents appreciate, and are regularly reminded of, the need for good attendance. Attendance remains below average although measures to improve it, and punctuality, have been remarkably successful in a short time. Pupils like to exercise and take up the many opportunities the school offers, for example playing games with the midday staff at lunchtime. They know about eating well and are starting to try healthy options at lunchtime. Water is not easily accessible in the classroom. Most pupils are keen to learn. Behaviour is satisfactory overall but good in some situations, with pupils listening carefully to each other and showing respect for others' views. In some classes pupils are slow to respond to the teacher's request for attention and they occasionally disturb the learning of others. Although their basic skills are weak, pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their next school because they have good attitudes to learning which will help them settle and improve.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The impact of teaching on pupils' learning is satisfactory overall, but it varies through the school. It is good in the Foundation Stage. Good teaching makes effective use of information on what pupils have learned in previous lessons to plan tasks that meet the needs of all well. Because they are interested and engaged in these lessons, pupils' behaviour is much more easily managed. Teachers' questioning finds out what pupils remember and raises their self-esteem by praising their responses. Where teaching is less effective tasks are sometimes too easy for the pupils or the content is not presented in a lively and stimulating way. Class management is sometimes ineffective. This leads to pupils losing interest in learning and not making enough progress. In the Foundation Stage there are lots of adults to guide children's learning through a thoughtfully planned mix of whole class teaching and exciting 'play' activities. Staff are very good at encouraging children's independence and promoting their language by asking children to explain what they are doing.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is planned carefully to meet the needs of all pupils. The school's approach to planning was first tried out in Key Stage 1 and has contributed to the improved standards at the end of Year 2. The approach has now been adopted in Key Stage 2 and pupils are getting more experience of using their language and mathematical skills in other subjects. For example, some pupils wrote well thought-out letters thanking their hosts following recent visits to Tam O'Shanter Farm and a local museum. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well by specialist staff who deliver successful additional programmes, like letter sounds, to help these pupils catch up. However, support in class is less effective because the range of needs is so wide. Provision to promote pupils' personal development is good. For example, they and their parents learned a great deal from the 'Health Promoting Day' where they tried different foods and prepared a 'healthy lunchbox'. For a small school there is a good range of extra clubs and activities on offer, which help pupils to stay active.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school recognises that pupils will not make maximum progress without the support of parents and carers and so management has worked hard to engage them in their children's learning. Parents welcome this initiative and say that they fully support the school. They praise the staff because they are always ready to 'go the extra mile' for them and their children. The school is very successful in getting support from outside agencies to help pupils on an individual level and also for major occasions like the recent 'Healthy Feelings day'. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place. Attendance and punctuality are checked very closely and both good and improving attendance are rewarded. Some pupils are confused as to how to improve their work because the quality of teachers' marking varies considerably; nevertheless, there are pockets of good practice.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Everyone involved in the school shares the headteacher's view that the pupils can and will achieve well. Senior managers have gone some way to meeting that aim by improving the curriculum, standards in Key Stage 1 and attendance. Furthermore, they ensure that all pupils, and especially the most vulnerable, are well cared for at all times. In meeting the needs of the pupils they recognise that their parents are key partners in the process. The school has been very successful in engaging the skills and resources of parents and outside agencies to aid pupils' learning, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. From accurate checking of teaching and learning senior managers recognise that improvements need to be made to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress. Where teaching is not good enough support has been provided, including local authority intervention. Pupils' progress is checked regularly. This effectively identifies pupils who need additional support or greater challenge. Subject leaders are effective in raising standards because they have a good understanding of what needs to be done and check the impact of their actions closely. Foundation Stage staff have a very close working partnership which enables provision to be particularly effectively managed.

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## Annex A

## 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>
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of St Paul's Catholic Primary School, Beechwood, CH43 7TE

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school recently. I listened carefully to what you had to say and used your ideas when coming to my views of the school. I think that your school has many good aspects, but is satisfactory overall. This is because your progress in English, mathematics and science is satisfactory, although some of you find writing difficult. The school is helping you to improve your skills, for example by doing more writing in history and geography. Your personal development is good and all staff look after you very well. I think that the Foundation Stage is good because it enables children to play and learn in many exciting ways.

You showed great confidence when you spoke with me. It was good to hear that you felt safe in school and I am pleased to say that your parents support your views. The Year 6 pupils told me all about the good work of the school council. They also knew many ways to stay healthy. Most of you behave well, but in some classes you do not respond very quickly to the teacher's call for your attention.

Your headteacher and the governing body work well together and are improving things for you. I have asked them to do the following two things which will help your progress.

- Make sure that all the teaching is of the highest standard so that you all make the best progress.
- Help you to improve your writing skills.

You can help by always coming to school and being on time, by doing your best in every lesson and by making sure that every piece of work you do is completed promptly and neatly. I hope that you are proud of what your school has achieved and will play your part in improving it further. I wish you and the school well for the future.