



St Hilda's Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105351
Local Authority Bury
Inspection number 287205
Inspection dates 11–12 January 2007
Reporting inspector Judith Clarke

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Whittaker Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Prestwich, Manchester
Age range of pupils	4–11		Lancashire M25 1HA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 7986227
Number on roll (school)	95	Fax number	0161 7735320
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Mike Geelan
		Headteacher	Mr Ross McMurdo
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 11–12 January 2007	Inspection number 287205
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school, whose number on roll is falling. The pupils come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. Almost all children are of White British heritage. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion with statements of special educational need. The number of pupils who join and leave the school during their school careers is also above average. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Hilda's is a good school, which is improving steadily. Parents recognise the commitment of the staff and the effectiveness of the support and guidance given to the pupils, both in their personal and academic development. Pupils say that the staff take good care of them and help them to learn. The leadership of the school has an accurate perception of the school's strengths and weaknesses and there has been a meticulous and thorough approach to setting clear priorities for development. As a consequence, standards have risen in English and science within the last two years. Attendance rates have improved, provision for information and communication technology is better and the accommodation has improved to provide a comfortable and stimulating environment for learning. Issues from the last inspection have in the main been dealt with and the school has correctly identified there is more to do to improve standards in mathematics. Overall, pupils make good progress throughout the school. They start school in their Reception year with levels of attainment below those expected of children of their age. Here the children have a good start to their education in a busy and stimulating environment alongside Year 1 and 2 pupils. Achievement overall is good throughout the school but better in English and science than in mathematics. As a result, standards are broadly average but slightly better in English and science than in mathematics. There is still more that can be done to raise standards further in mathematics. The school has received the Healthy School and Activemark awards which demonstrate the school's commitment to promoting a fit and healthy lifestyle for the pupils. The school council run a healthy tuck shop at playtimes. They are responsible for managing a small budget and use their resources to improve different aspects of the school. For example, they have bought games for the playgrounds. Lots of sporting activities including gymnastics and dance, coupled with organised football games at lunchtimes, encourage the pupils to develop their sporting and social skills. The school council provides a useful newsletter, which includes reminders, for instance, about healthy eating and how to keep safe. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons and find them interesting and relevant. They talk enthusiastically about visitors to the school and visits out of school. For example, the older pupils are enthusiastically anticipating a residential experience. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are good and reflect the strong relationships with the teachers and support staff. Good teaching, coupled with good levels of care help the pupils to feel both safe and supported. Pupils know the staff, value their input in lessons and feel confident about their learning. Assessment is satisfactory. The pupils have effective targets in English to work towards but the targets are too general in mathematics to accelerate learning sufficiently. Other assessment strategies give the school an accurate perception of where the pupils are with their learning. But often they are too broad to give the teachers the precise information needed to enable them to focus their lesson planning so that the pupils make the maximum progress. The headteacher, staff and governors have created at St Hilda's an inclusive and warm environment where all the pupils are valued within a Christian framework. Self-evaluation is purposeful and drives the school forward. The inspection judged some aspects of the school's work better than the school; this is because it was overly cautious in some respects. Actions taken by the

school are well targeted and have had a good impact in bringing about school improvement. The school provides good value for money and has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in mathematics.
- Refine assessment procedures including the process of setting targets to identify more sharply where pupils could do better so that learning is accelerated, especially in mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Each year group in this small school has a very different size and make up. Significant numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and an above average number of pupils who move in and out of the school at different times contribute to variations in standards year on year. Nevertheless, achievement from pupils' starting points is good overall. This is borne out by school data. On entry to the Reception year the children's attainment is below the levels expected for their age. The children make good progress especially in their personal and social skills. This good overall progress continues throughout the school and standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. However, achievement in English and science is better than in mathematics. This position is reflected, for example, in the last national test results for Year 6 pupils. In 2006 standards in Year 6 were above average in English and science but below average in mathematics. Progress in mathematics is satisfactory. The school has correctly identified there is more to do to improve progress in mathematics and this is an area identified for whole school improvement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they have good help and support in their learning in class and group work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and well-being are good. Relationships in the school are strong and as a result the pupils are confident and happy. Older pupils play with younger pupils and football games at lunchtimes are of mixed gender teams. The midday supervisors reflect that it is rare to see a child alone; a happy companionship is usual. Behaviour in classes and around the school is good. Pupils agree that behaviour is good, although they are honest enough to admit that sometimes it does slip. However, all know the school rules, which are clear and consistently applied. The school has many initiatives in place to help the pupils understand and deal with their emotions which all help to promote the pupils' well-being. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They listen carefully to the class teachers and try hard to concentrate on their learning. Attendance is satisfactory. Attendance levels are improving as a result of the many effective strategies the school

has put in place to encourage good attendance and punctuality. The pupils talk about the need to keep safe, active and healthy and speak about the many opportunities to develop their sporting skills. The active role of the school council helps the pupils to gain an understanding of the need to prioritise resources and consider the views of others. The school is particularly outward looking as it fundraises for those less fortunate at home and abroad.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 class the teacher skilfully manages the needs of all pupils as she plans their learning. She is ably assisted by the support assistants who give good targeted teaching for specific groups of pupils. A strength of teaching overall is in the use of the interactive whiteboards to promote interesting and engaging lessons. Strong relationships and a good knowledge of all the pupils in this small school also supports effective teaching. Coupled with this is the good use of support staff to help those who find their learning hard or have difficulty managing their behaviour. The teaching of mathematics is judged satisfactory rather than good because assessment procedures in place for mathematics are not specific enough to target exactly what the pupils are to learn. Consequently, lesson planning is not sufficiently targeted to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils have individual targets for learning and these are effective in English, but in mathematics they are not sufficiently precise enough to accelerate learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It takes account of the pupils different needs, so that their interests as well as their personal and emotional needs are well catered for. The curriculum is carefully managed to take into account the different year groups in each class. Special weeks with themes, for example 'The Circus' and 'Africa', enthuse the pupils and make their learning stimulating and exciting. Visits to places of interest, visitors to the school, including authors, all add to the learning opportunities planned for the pupils. For instance, work with the Park Rangers on science and environmental issues have helped and supported the pupils' learning in science. Recently the pupils have been working with the teachers and headteacher in evaluating one area of the curriculum to bring about improvements to the topics taught within the subject. This demonstrates the school's commitment to providing a relevant curriculum for the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support provided for the pupils are good. Staff in this small school know the pupils well and in turn, pupils feel secure and valued. They say they feel particularly well supported and the school places a high priority on pupils understanding their own feelings and those of others. This has a positive impact on behaviour and attitudes in school. Appropriate arrangements are in place for child protection, safeguarding of pupils and ensuring their health and safety. Pupils who join the school part way through their schooling are quickly included in the life and work of the school. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped and guided with their work so that they have work that is matched to their needs. There are many opportunities for children to be rewarded for good behaviour, work and attendance and the pupils respond well to praise. Parents value the work of the school and recognise the good help the school provides for their children. Procedures for tracking pupils' progress and involving them in setting targets for their learning are effective in English but are not as strong in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has a purposeful, thorough approach to school improvement. They are both well supported by all staff who work with a consistent approach throughout the school. Consequently, school initiatives for improvement have the commitment of all the staff. The school is active in gathering training for all staff and the local authority has been particularly effective in this respect. The midday supervisors have had training for their roles and are included in parents' evenings where they explain to parents about the activities available during the lunchtime sessions. The impact of this whole school approach can clearly be seen in the way standards have risen and the determination within the school to improve further. The headteacher has correctly prioritised areas for development and has a clear set of values and a clarity of educational purpose. The governing body provides good support for the school. The chair of governors plays an active role in the school and works effectively with different groups of pupils. The governing body has a good perception of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They understand that the current falling roll situation could have serious implications for the school and, along with the headteacher, are working diligently to try to improve the position.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
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

As you know, I recently visited your school to find out how well you are getting on with your work and how well your teachers are helping you. Thank you for being so friendly and talking to me. I really enjoyed talking to you about your work, visiting your classes, watching your assembly and speaking to your teachers. I think your school is a good school that helps you to learn well.

What I liked most about your school.

- You behave well both in class and in the playgrounds and play well together.
- In lessons you try hard and you say that you find your lessons interesting.
- All the staff work hard to make sure that lessons are good so that you can do your best.
- Your school council is busy thinking of ways to help to improve your school.
- You have lots of interesting lessons and learn about interesting subjects.
- Your headteacher runs your school well. He wants you all to do well and succeed in all you do.
- Your parents and carers are right in thinking you go to a good school.

I know that you all have targets for improvement in English and mathematics and you tell me that they are useful in helping you to know what you need to do next. They have worked very well in English but not so well in mathematics, so I think your teachers might need to look at these again to make them better. The school thinks and I agree that the progress you make in your mathematics lessons could be quicker. I think you could play your part by keeping up all the hard work you have been doing but perhaps work a little bit harder with your maths. It would be a good idea for the older pupils, for example, to make sure they know their times tables. I hope that you will continue to work hard in school and help the teachers so that St Hilda's becomes even better.