



St Gilbert's RC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105954
Local Authority Salford
Inspection number 287377
Inspection date 31 January 2007
Reporting inspector Delia Hiscock

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | Cambell Road |
| School category | Voluntary aided | | Winton, Eccles |
| Age range of pupils | 3-11 | | Manchester, Lancashire |
| | | | M30 8LZ |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 0161 7895035 |
| Number on roll (school) | 239 | Fax number | 0161 9211671 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Mr Stephen Garrat |
| | | Headteacher | P Hamilton |
| Date of previous school inspection | 12 March 2001 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This very popular school serves a busy urban city population. There is a higher than average amount of socio-economic disadvantage in the area of the school, though a much smaller than average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is small. Nearly all the pupils are of White British heritage. A few pupils are from minority ethnic families and none speaks English as an additional language. The school is broadly average in its size.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding school provides exceptional value for money. Parents and pupils think so too. Standards are well above average and the pupils mature into caring and very thoughtful individuals who believe that respect is an ideal to live by. This is why the school is oversubscribed. To achieve this, the school continually strives to improve, the quality of care is outstanding and the curriculum develops the talents and skills of its pupils really well. There is an assumption that everyone can and will do their very best to attain their potential and where possible, exceed the challenging targets set for their academic progress and personal development. Leadership and management overall are outstanding. The excellent work of the headteacher, supported by very capable governance, results in an excellent track record of sustaining attainment. Recruitment is impressive, and staff induction and support is excellent. The perception of what will make a positive difference to provision and to pupils' achievement is drawn from penetrating analysis and exacting evaluation. Consequently, resources are used to best effect. The school is so successful also because the charismatic lead of the headteacher has built a highly effective professional culture backed up by a steely structure of responsibility and accountability.

Well above average standards at the end of Year 6 have been sustained for a period of six years and celebrate the school's success. Despite changes in staffing, the outstanding quality of teaching and learning overall nurtures pupils' skills and helps them to learn quickly and enjoyably and gain remarkable interpersonal skills, despite the small classrooms. From their start in Nursery, the children make outstandingly good progress from their below average stage of development to the time they leave for the high school. As a result, their achievement is outstanding. In the Foundation Stage, Nursery children build well on their below average levels of development and the often immature language skills of boys improve well. They go on to attain broadly average standards at the end of their Reception Year. The strong start in their personal and social skills sets the scene well for the high expectations the school sets for their behaviour.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly average. Pupils' work shows good progress, despite unavoidable staffing changes over a period of years that has caused some slight inconsistencies in the teaching priorities, and in writing in particular, where occasionally pupils worry about perfecting their handwriting. This slows the flow of their ideas. With staffing issues resolved, the school is far from complacent and effective action is underway. That noted, the pupils become curious young learners, gaining slightly better skills in reading than in writing and to an extent, in mathematics, but which overall form a firm foundation for their future development. The curriculum is outstanding in quality. Provision equips pupils with the skills and knowledge about the choices open to them in the future, draws very well on the support of external partners and specialist teachers to provide, for example, impressive dance opportunities and a wide scope of instrumental music tuition. Pupils' skills in information and communications technology (ICT) are good and the pupils say that they think that their school is 'really good' because they know they are valued. One child commented:

'we're treated like adults.' He is right in his remarks about the respect the school has for the uniqueness of each child. This is why attendance and behaviour are outstanding. The school has a very good capacity to move forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Teach handwriting skills in ways that ensure that pupils in Key Stage 1 learn to express their ideas in writing fluently from an early stage.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The school's six year pattern of well above average standards, including the results of 2006 national tests, places it in the category of the top performing proportion of schools in the country for the progress the pupils make in Key Stage 2. Overall, pupils' achievement is outstanding, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those pupils from different family heritages.

When the children start the Foundation Stage in Nursery, their stages of development are below average, and the communication skills of the boys is less mature than that of the girls, factors that the school addresses from the earliest opportunity. Children make good progress and by the end of their Reception Year, standards attained are broadly average. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards are average, though attainment is slightly higher in reading than in writing and mathematics. Their work and the school's information show good progress in Key Stage 1, despite unavoidable staffing changes for a period of years that are now resolved.

Consistently well above average standards at the end of Key Stage 2, in English, mathematics and science reflect the outstandingly good progress that the pupils make in their skills and understanding. This is marked, in particular, by the high proportions of pupils attaining the higher levels in these subjects. In addition, many of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities attain the skills expected for their age. The school often exceeds the rigorous targets set for its performance.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of pupils are outstanding, as is the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils want to come to school and their attendance is excellent. When asked why, they say that they really like their school and feel a big part of it. As one school council spokesperson commented: 'We're treated with respect . like adults.' It is one of the reasons why behaviour is excellent and the result of the outstanding ethos of the school, the high expectations of pupils, and the close relationship with families and the church. The empathy that pupils gain enables them to understand those who are less fortunate in society, so they see the reason to make their own contribution, which they do through their fundraising. This helps them to develop a really good understanding of heritages other than their own.

The school council is a forum where the pupils learn well how to transform ideas into outcomes that benefit others. Pupils are extremely well motivated to learn, conscientious and mature beyond their years. Many of the pupils choose healthy foods for themselves, and they say that sports and the busy playground help them to keep fit too. Their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT help prepare them very well for the future, but it is the qualities they gain and the principles they hold that make them stand out in their generation.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is excellent overall, and enables the pupils to make very good progress. Specialist teaching, excellent subject knowledge and well-matched teaching approaches, combined with very effective planning and incisive use of assessment are the key features that gear learning activities really closely to the needs of most pupils. Ordinary resources are used to best learning effect and there is a rigorous pace to lessons that features perceptive use of questioning to ensure that pupils grasp ideas. Pupils know exactly what they are to learn, and benefit from an excellent range of supportive resources that help them to reinforce key ideas, learn for themselves and increasingly, to check how successful they are in their work. Teaching assistants make a professional contribution to learning also, including that provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are excellent relationships between everyone. Teachers have high expectations for their pupils and encourage them to do as well as they can. Typically, the pupils are studious, absorbed in their work and quietly soak up increasing challenges. This starts early and robustly in Key Stage 1, though occasionally the focus on handwriting slows pupils' flow of ideas.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. The needs of all its pupils are met exceptionally well because the activities provided are carefully tailored to make learning very interesting and to overcome the confines of the small classrooms. The school provides plenty of educational visits and visitors, some excellent work in dance, music and the arts, and purposeful extra-curricular activities that are taken up keenly. Pupils' gain important knowledge about how to keep healthy and safe through the provision for personal, social and health education that filters through each day and not simply in lessons. The skills that pupils need for life feature highly in many of the activities provided and help pupils to reinforce and extend those they have acquired. There is good provision for children in the Foundation Stage. Transition links to the high schools make another valuable contribution to provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided are excellent. The requirements for the care, safety and protection of pupils are in place, including those for risk assessment, which are scrupulously checked by governance. There is also very good support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Guidance for academic progress and the support provided are thorough, systematic, and are very effective in leveraging up attainment and supporting pupils' engagement early in their education. This is how the pupils become really studious, eager to learn and able to sustain their high levels of concentration and interest. They benefit greatly from knowing exactly what they are to learn and from the discussions about their work which tell them how well they are doing. This is seen in dance also, where pupils gain prime evaluation tools to gauge their own development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides an excellent lead, has raised and sustained standards, and developed a highly effective team that keeps pupils' well-being and the pulse of their learning foremost. To implement the vision for the school, planning for the future is very well communicated, initiatives are drawn upon wisely, professional training is undertaken to match precise needs and resources are allocated and managed astutely. Above all, the school invests in its people and the pupils reap the benefits of their knowledge. Leadership believes passionately in the potential of everyone and endeavours to foster this aim. The high level of accountability and assumption that all the pupils will achieve, come what may, are barely noticed, as agreed decisions are followed through to the letter. As one leader commented, 'the commitment to embedding change is an absolute expectation'. The unassuming professional climate translates this into action, reflected in a refreshing buzz of professional dialogue in the school. Accordingly, most of the subject leaders gain very effective skills to bring about further improvement. They are unstinting in their support of teachers new to the profession. Governance is perceptive, provides plenty of expertise and asks pertinent questions of the school before making choices. This is why the school has an excellent capacity to move forward in its developments.

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Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 1 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 1 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 |

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

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 1 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 1 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 1 |
| 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

Hello. Do you remember my visit to your school? I won't forget it because you were really helpful and very polite when you talked with me. It was really very interesting listening to what you had to say. I am writing this letter to tell you that I found your school to be outstanding. I agree with you and your parents.

All of the staff try really hard to make sure that you are well looked after and they try to make sure too, that you all do as well as you can in your work, whatever little worries one or two of you might have. They also try to help you to develop your talents in dance, art, music and sports when there is the chance to.

I think that you behave extremely well and that you work ever so hard. This is one of the things that help you to do so well. Like you, I think that there are lots of great things happening in school. Many of these help you to grow up really well to become mature and sensible ambassadors for your school.

To help you to do even better, I have asked the school to:

- help some of you in infant classes to write down your wonderful ideas quickly so that you worry less about perfecting your handwriting. It is getting good!

I could see that you know how to keep safe and that many of you choose healthy foods too. Keep up your good work, look after each other. Good luck with your dance performance at the Lowry Centre.