



# St Mary and St John Catholic Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 106459  
**Local Authority** Wigan  
**Inspection number** 287518  
**Inspection date** 6 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Delia Hiscock

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Standishgate
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Wigan
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11		Lancashire WN1 1XL
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 206733
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	209	<b>Fax number</b>	01942 513869
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Lyn Cottrill
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs M Kearsley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 October 2001		

<b>Age group</b> 4-11	<b>Inspection date</b> 6 February 2007	<b>Inspection number</b> 287518
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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 population. There is a smaller than average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and a similarly small proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Nearly all the pupils are of White British heritage. A few pupils are from minority ethnic families, a tiny proportion of whom speak English as an additional language. The school is smaller than average in 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. This is because the pupils really like their school, they feel that they have a genuine stake in the developments, and their achievement is outstanding. They mature into confident, articulate and thoughtful individuals who are able to consult and negotiate their way through projects that they feel are important. The standards they attain are high and have been so for many years. To achieve this, the school makes wise and measured decisions, adapts new initiatives and uses partnerships and outside agencies very well to support the pastoral and academic needs of the pupils. There is a family feel to the school and the work of the staff is warm in the way that the needs of pupils are tended. Pupils' behaviour and attendance are outstanding. The high quality of care contributes to the outstanding level of their personal development and well-being. The school is adept at pulling out all the stops to make sure that pupils achieve really well. There is lots of fun too. This is evident from pupils' conversations.

From their start in the Reception Year to the time they leave at the end of Year 6, pupils make outstandingly good progress. This includes the pupils who have learning difficulties and those who are learning to speak English. In the Foundation Stage, the children build well on their average levels of development on entry, making very good progress to attain above average standards at the end of their Reception Year. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are well above average because the pupils continue to make very good progress here. The very good progress continues through Key Stage 2, where pupils also reach very high standards.

These outcomes are central to the school's purpose that each child achieves their potential. Everyone works together to fulfil this aim. There are scrupulous checks on the pupils' progress and any signs of worry in a child or possible underachievement are flagged up and tracked meticulously. Very well tailored care, support and guidance are provided so that pupils rise to the high expectations the school has of them. This is how the school's very rigorous targets set for performance are frequently met and sometimes exceeded. The exceptional leadership of the headteacher is an unassuming and enabling force that sustains success and drives the school forward very successfully. The wider leadership team is very skilful and includes critical and informed governance. Together they provide an outstanding quality of leadership and management that recruits very effectively and develops people very well. Their evaluation is insightful and rigorous though cautious in judging anything to be exceptional. This is because the school strives to do more for its pupils and why the school has an excellent capacity to move forward in its developments.

The pupils themselves follow through the school's thrifty securing of the best value possible in the decisions they make through many valuable projects. These qualities and skills are fostered also by the outstanding quality of teaching and learning that brings great interest, enjoyment and a consistently very good pace to pupils' progress. Although the curriculum is outstanding in quality and enables pupils to gain the skills and knowledge about the choices open to them in the future, the school recognises that now is the time to redesign topics with an eye to the needs of pupils in the society

of the future. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are developing quickly as a result of recent improvements. Already, the creative animations of Year 6 bring lots of smiles in the school.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that its exciting new curriculum planning maximises the opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their basic skills even further.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. This includes those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those who are from different family heritages and those newly arrived from other countries. When children start the Reception Year, (the Foundation Stage) their standards are broadly average. They make very good progress so that by the end of that year, they attain above average standards. Continued good progress leads to standards that are well above average at the end of Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, pupils move on at the same lively pace and many of the lower-attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties make additional leaps forward because they gain the understanding and skills to make the most of exciting and creative lessons. This is the result of astutely tailored teaching that follows on from keen analysis of the pupils' potential rather than simply accepting what they have attained. Consistently high standards are the result. This was marked in particular in 2006 by two thirds of pupils attaining the higher levels in English and all of them attaining the standard expected for their age in mathematics. The school often exceeds the very rigorous targets set for its performance.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development and well-being are outstanding, as is pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a family feel to the school and the pupils' well-being is genuinely heart-felt. Very positive attitudes to learning and the respect pupils have for others grow from the strong relationship the school has with families and the Church. At the heart of the school's work the pupils' voice is genuinely heeded. The school council, for example, is an exceptionally active forum where pupils negotiate, research, take actions and make visits to transform ideas that benefit others. Their astute economic skills and awareness make a huge difference to the decisions they make in allocating funds to important projects such as cycle storage for the school's travel plans. Once they have an idea they like, a job to do, or perceive a need, they 'run' with it until they find a resolution. This level of involvement is a prime reason why pupils really like school and why their behaviour and attendance are excellent. Pupils also develop a good understanding of and empathy with children with heritages other than their own or who are less fortunate. In response to being asked about those who are different in any way to themselves, they offer a refreshing view: 'If people

are different, we look out for them more.' The school's recent Healthy Schools and Activemark awards reflect the eagerness with which many of the pupils choose fruit, bring healthy lunch packs when they can and keep fit. Equally, their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT prepare them very well for the future. Consequently many of them mature into young ambassadors who really care about others.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

The excellent quality of teaching and learning enables pupils to make very good progress. Teaching features very good relationships, some expert knowledge, creative approaches and professional work from teaching assistants, combined with thorough planning and incisive use of assessment. In addition, there are innovative and sometimes fast-moving activities that grab pupils' attention and make learning fun, and are designed really well to meet their needs. This is how the school ensures consistently very good progress. In addition, day-to-day resources are used to best effect. Sometimes learning is raised to a level of great enthusiasm when teachers bring the unexpected into the lesson, such as the backpack of a lost explorer. The pace and variety of learning is peppered by exciting mathematics games and powerful ways to motivate pupils using ICT. Pupils know exactly what they are to learn, what they need to do to improve and some know what they could aspire to achieve. These are the reasons that the pupils become conscientious and keen learners who lap up increasing challenge and the opportunities to explore new ideas and skills.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The outstanding curriculum meets pupils' needs exceptionally well through carefully tailored provision that makes learning very interesting. The school provides plenty of rich educational visits and visitors, instrumental music, the arts, and a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils soak up important knowledge about how to keep healthy, fit and safe through the very good provision for personal, social and health education that pervades their conversation in the playground and the spirited challenges they set for themselves. There is very good provision for children in the Foundation Stage that sets them off to a strong start. Excellent links between schools help to extend provision and smooth transition to the high school. Life skills feature well in lots of subjects and help pupils to reinforce and extend those they have already acquired. Nevertheless, the school is not complacent. It plans to revamp this highly successful curriculum to ensure that pupils are as well equipped as possible for their future by developing some creative topics through which they can develop their basic skills even further.

## 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. Very good support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Early identification, thorough checks and sensitive support are much valued by parents because the school recognises their children's potential and goes out of its way to ensure they achieve their best, as it does for others. Academic guidance and support are thorough, and are very effective in tracking pupils' progress, levering up attainment realistically and helping pupils to understand what to aspire to and how to get there. This is how they grow into confident, conscientious individuals, eager to learn and work together.

## 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 for whom pupils' well-being is foremost. This is complemented by the very skilled work of the deputy headteacher who, as one pupil commented, 'can turn a lesson plan round to make it much more fun'. The calm, welcoming friendliness of the school is built on an uncompromising but sensitive determination in leadership to sustain the momentum of development and high standards. This is evident in the school's proven track record and the excellent self-evaluation to bring this about. People come first. The school invests in them whether new teachers, pupils, parents or helpers. This pays dividends for the pupils' well-being and personal development. Staff development is vital to the school, recruitment is excellent, initiatives are drawn upon wisely, and resources are allocated and managed very astutely so that the pupils reap the benefits. Leadership at all levels is exacting and believes in the potential of everyone. Leaders fulfil their roles very well because accountability for each pupil's progress underpins the school's aim and purpose. The unassuming professional climate translates aims and plans into action because everyone wants to do the best for the pupils and has the very effective skills to do so. Governance is reflective, critical, very active and provides plenty of expertise and guidance.

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## Inspection judgements

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

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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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

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

<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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	1
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 again. I really enjoyed my visit to your school and I won't forget it because you were so interesting to talk with and very courteous. I was delighted to hear about all the things you get involved in and all the efforts you make to change things that you feel are important for yourselves and others. I am writing this letter to tell you that I found your school to be an outstanding one. This means that it is one of the best!

Everyone in the school tries really hard to make sure that you are well looked after so that you can do as well as you can in your work, even if you have some worries or are not quite sure about something you are learning. They also provide lots of activities to help you to develop your talents in music and sport, and to keep fit and healthy. The Playground Challenge looked great fun and really fast too!

I found also 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 and gain lots of valuable skills for your life ahead. Like you, I think that there are lots of super things happening in school. Many of these help you to grow into become mature and sensible ambassadors for your school.

The world of the future will need people like you who are good at thinking, ask important questions and work so well with others. I know that your school is providing you with a super education. The staff want to continue to do this for other pupils who come to the school after you so they want to come up with plans for new topics for pupils to use their skills. This is why I have asked the school to:

- Design and teach some even more exciting topics for you to explore so that you and pupils in the future use your skills in lots of new ways.

Keep up your really good work and look after each other! Perhaps Year 6's animations will reach the big screen?