



Twelve Apostles Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 106503
Local Authority Wigan
Inspection number 287530
Inspection date 18 January 2007
Reporting inspector Jim Kidd

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Nel Pan Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Leigh
Age range of pupils	4-11		Lancashire WN7 5JS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01942 674312
Number on roll (school)	216	Fax number	-
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr E Taylor
		Headteacher	Mr M Farrimond
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2001		

Age group 4-11	Inspection date 18 January 2007	Inspection number 287530
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves a mixed area, parts of which suffer from considerable social and economic disadvantage. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. On entry to the Reception class, children generally have skills which are below those usually found. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Most pupils are of White British heritage and there are few from minority ethnic groups. XII Apostles is working towards the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Excellent leadership, consistently high standards and comprehensive care and support for the whole child are just three elements of this outstanding school, of which pupils, staff and parents are immensely proud. As parents comment, 'There is a real sense of community in XII Apostles and all our children are made to feel valued.'

Pupils thrive on outstanding teaching and on a curriculum which ensures that they develop academic and personal skills very effectively and at a rapid rate. Children get the best possible start in the Reception class, make excellent progress, particularly in social skills, and are prepared very well for entry into Year 1. This outstanding achievement continues for all groups of pupils across Key Stages 1 and 2. By the time they leave, both boys and girls reach exceptionally high levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening need to be fostered more consistently if the high standards in literacy are to be maintained.

Pupils attend well and enjoy everything their school offers them. 'Our school is the best!' say members of the school council, who do a great deal to help younger children and to teach them how to live healthy lives. Pupils' behaviour is very good indeed and relationships between all members of the school community are a strong feature. The curriculum is outstanding. The clear emphasis on key skills, links between subjects and creativity in learning have a positive effect on pupils' aspirations. They particularly enjoy the themed weeks, and in their words, 'the fun activities in English'. Care and guidance for all pupils, irrespective of their differing needs, are outstanding. The quality of support from teaching assistants is of the highest calibre. As a result, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do exceptionally well.

The inspirational qualities of the headteacher result in a strong sense of teamwork among staff and in outstanding leadership and management in all areas of the school. All staff are totally committed to ongoing improvement. There is no hint of complacency, because they all play their part in evaluating performance and each has an important say in how the school is to develop.

In XII Apostles, pupils and staff thrive within a safe and stimulating environment. Parents are correct in their belief that the school is true to its mission statement, 'Pupils will be given every opportunity to develop their skills, talents, knowledge and values fully to enable everyone to develop a confidence in their own worth.' Pupils' high levels of achievement, the impressive care provided for them and the quality of leadership and management demonstrate that it has outstanding capacity to improve further and that it provides outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

The school has no significant weaknesses. However, in order to maintain standards in literacy it should:

- Further develop pupils' speaking and listening skills across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

From a starting point of below average attainment on entry to the Reception class, learners consistently make outstanding progress in all key stages. They reach extremely high standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Children's achievement in personal, social and emotional development in the Foundation Stage is similarly impressive and provides them with a strong basis on which to develop their future learning.

In 2005 and 2006, all pupils in Year 6 reached or surpassed their challenging targets. No-one scored below National Curriculum Level 3 and there was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Moreover, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made the same progress as others. This outstanding achievement is due in no small part to the excellent work of the talented team of teaching assistants. In order to maintain these impressive standards and levels of achievement, the school will need to foster pupils' speaking and listening skills across all sections of the curriculum.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils arrive in the morning with smiles on their faces, greet their classmates, teachers and visitors with warmth and are keen to get down to work. As they say, 'Our teachers are kind to us and they make everything fun! We all feel safe in our school and we know how to look after each other.' Behaviour is impeccable and older pupils act as playleaders for younger ones and run the healthy tuck shop at break times. The school council comprises representatives from Years 1 to 6. They are very proud of the work they do to encourage everyone to lead a healthy lifestyle: they distribute fruit each day and speak positively of the Tasty Table in the dining room on Wednesdays. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. In the words of parents, 'The development of well balanced individuals gives the headteacher and staff as much satisfaction as excellent examination results.' A wide range of charities benefit from the generosity of the pupils, who make particular mention of The Good Shepherd Collection and Med-equip for children. The school's success in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, the Enterprise Weeks and the many opportunities pupils have to consider work-related topics prepare them exceptionally well for life after school. Attendance is above average and is improving steadily as a result of the work of the now full-time learning mentor.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding, with exemplary practice in all key stages. Pupils respond positively to the dignified treatment they receive, and relationships between learners and between learners and adults are invariably excellent. Teachers have the highest expectations of what their pupils can achieve, and challenge for all levels of ability is entirely appropriate. Pupils in Year 2, for example, used the words 'phoneme' and 'grapheme' accurately and with aplomb: they were desperate to answer increasingly complex questions designed to foster their literacy development. Similarly, in an outstanding history lesson, pupils in Year 4 discussed the reasons for the many marriages of Henry VIII with a confidence which belies their years. The use of the interactive whiteboard as a teaching and learning tool is a strong feature of all lessons, and pupils themselves use new technology for their personal research with consummate skill.

The assessment of pupils' learning is comprehensive and marking is regular, detailed and informative. As a result, any difficulties learners have are highlighted rapidly and the outstanding team of teaching assistants intervenes quickly and very effectively to tackle them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum provides an ideal balance between support for pupils' academic success, their personal development and opportunities for them to be creative in their learning. Parents recognise this and say, 'The school is about education in its broadest sense. It not only concentrates on the academic side, it also develops pupils' social skills through the out-of-school activities and many family functions which teachers organise.' The planning of the curriculum is near faultless and teachers strive to ensure that their pupils see the links in learning across all their subjects. Pupils are grateful for this approach and say that their lessons are brought alive by the Themed Weeks, One World Week for example, which are the result of this cross-curricular coverage. There needs to be a more consistent approach to developing pupils' speaking and listening skills in all areas of the curriculum.

Sport and games are a major element of the wide range of enrichment activities. The school rightly prides itself on the exceptional variety of trips, visits and visitors. The annual residential week for pupils in Year 6 is yet another example of a curriculum which is designed also to encourage pupils to cooperate maturely with others.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

In the words of parents, this is a 'caring school which creates a safe, welcoming environment and in which everyone is valued, irrespective of their ability'. Indeed, support and guidance are outstanding and there is an overarching emphasis on pastoral care for each individual so that all can do their best, both academically and personally. Pupils love their school and are proud to support their classmates to ensure that everyone feels happy and secure. Child protection procedures are in place and are clearly understood by all staff. Adults safeguard and support vulnerable pupils with skill and sensitivity. There is an excellent partnership with outside agencies to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Pupils enjoy showing visitors their laminated target sheets, which comprise the targets the pupils are aiming to reach and advice on how success may be assured. These are a testament to the high level of academic guidance offered by the school and do much to ensure that pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve their standards. It is hardly surprising, then, that the achievement of all groups of pupils is consistently so very high.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

At all levels, leadership and management are outstanding. The dedicated headteacher has the highest expectations of both pupils and staff and inspires all to take a pride in achievement in all areas of school life. Teachers and teaching assistants speak with one voice: 'We are a team. Our leaders are approachable, encouraging and give us clear direction. We all play our part in determining the vision for our school.' Governors share this strong sense of purpose, too. They are very supportive of the school but are not afraid to challenge the leadership when they feel it necessary to do so.

XII Apostles is a 'thinking school' in which decisions taken are based on an accurate evaluation of performance and on careful consideration of the views of all stakeholders. The school has a keen understanding of its strengths but is also modest about its achievements, because it knows that nothing is ever perfect. For instance, pupils' personal development was judged to be good, when it is in fact outstanding. The monitoring of teaching and learning is quite superb. Even teachers who receive the highest grade during lesson observations receive advice on how their performance can be improved further. They accept these comments gladly because they are totally committed to providing the best possible deal for their pupils.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

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	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

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ 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

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	2
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

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

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	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

Thank you all for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed meeting and talking to you. I thought you would like to know what I thought of your school.

XII Apostles is an outstanding school and you are right to be so proud of it. You behave very well indeed, get on with each other and enjoy helping pupils who sometimes find things difficult. Older pupils do a lot to make younger ones feel happy and safe. The play leaders are very kind to them and often support pupils who are feeling a little lonely. The school council is very good. Its members have some interesting ideas as to how the school can get even better and how everyone in it can live healthy lives.

Your teachers and teaching assistants care for you very well and their teaching is excellent. Because of this and because you work so hard yourselves, you make excellent progress and your standards in your subjects are very high indeed.

You really enjoy the many sports activities you have and like the trips and visits you make. Some of you told me how much you enjoy the themed weeks and also said that teachers make your lessons fun. Your headteacher and all your other teachers work very hard indeed to make XII Apostles what it is and they know how to improve the school even further.

Please continue to work hard with each other and with your teachers and try to improve your skills in speaking and listening, so that your standards in English are high every year.

Thank you once again for being so kind and friendly and for playing such an important part in the inspection. I enjoyed watching you learn.