



# St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 106506  
**Local Authority** Wigan  
**Inspection number** 287532  
**Inspection dates** 8–9 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Suzi Clipson-Boyles HMI

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>   | Kensington Drive    |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Voluntary aided    |                         | Higher Folds, Leigh |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 4–11               |                         | Lancashire WN7 2YG  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed              | <b>Telephone number</b> | 01942 673603        |
| <b>Number on roll (school)</b>            | 113                | <b>Fax number</b>       | 01942 681637        |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body | <b>Chair</b>            | Mr P Hindley        |
|   |                    | <b>Headteacher</b>      | Mrs M Naylor        |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 17 September 2001  |                         |                     |

|                          |  |                                    |
|--------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| <b>Age group</b><br>4–11 | <b>Inspection dates</b><br>8–9 November 2006 | <b>Inspection number</b><br>287532 |
|--------------------------|--|------------------------------------|

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. It has five classes, two of which consist of mixed-age groups for Years 2/3 and Years 4/5. It also provides an early morning breakfast club that many children attend. It is situated on a large housing estate where most of the children live, some in council owned and some in privately owned properties. There is a strong sense of community because the Catholic Church, its parish and people on the estate are regularly involved with the school. Almost all the children are of White British heritage. The number eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. There is a larger than usual proportion of children with learning disabilities and/or difficulties including those with statements of special educational need. The school works closely with other schools in the area as part of the local Excellence Cluster.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school where the staff work hard to give children an education that equips them for life. The leadership team puts inclusion at the centre of all its work. As a result, each child is helped to develop socially, emotionally and academically in ways that meet their individual needs. The good teaching and interesting curriculum lead to good progress. Clear expectations of children's work and behaviour mean that they work and play well together. The additional support that is given to children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a strength of the school and they make outstanding progress. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good because they have opportunities to learn, think and talk about meaningful issues.

The school makes accurate judgements of its work, but there are too many evaluation systems. As a result, the school's plans for further improvement have too many priorities. The school has improved since the last inspection, for instance the new library is well-stocked and well-used by the children who enjoy the interesting range of books. Staff work closely with various other partners which adds further to children's progress in their learning and their social development. For example, the Excellence Cluster, a group of local schools that receive extra funding, offers additional children's activities and training courses for teachers. Children enjoy coming to school and attendance has improved steadily over the last three years: it is now in line with the national average. They like their teachers and have good attitudes towards learning. Work is regularly marked but this does not always give children clear steps on how to improve next. The setting of targets is carried out in different ways and there is no consistent approach to involve children in this process.

Standards are low when children start school. They make very good progress in Reception and standards reach national expectations for this age group by the start of Year 1. Standards in Key Stage 1 have been rising steadily for three years due to the good progress in those classes and are now above national averages for reading, writing and mathematics. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are satisfactory. However, recent changes in the classroom organisation for Years 3 to 6 and also to the teaching have led to improved achievement. There are clear signs that this is making a positive difference and progress is now good in Key Stage 2. Exciting additional activities add much to the learning. For example, science is a strength in the school with results that are well above the national average. Enrichment such as the launching of a real rocket on the playing field by the 'Star Chaser' visitor contribute to this greatly.

Children are very well cared for in this school and say they feel safe. Bullying is rare, and when it does happen, it is sorted out effectively. If they have any worries or problems children know they can share these with staff. Those who are less confident to speak out use the learning mentor's 'Safe Box' to express their worries through a note. Good systems are in place for safeguarding the children. The school achieved the Healthy Schools Award some years ago and this has a positive effect on children's lives for some time. They have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They make sensible choices at lunchtime and enjoy the tasty and nutritious dinners that are provided. Specialist sports festivals are provided by links with St Mary's High

School and the children participate enthusiastically, knowing that it is good for them as well as being fun!

The school provides good opportunities for children to make positive contributions to the local and wider communities. This helps them to become caring citizens. For example, they participate enthusiastically in raising money for many different charities. There are good relationships between children and adults. The children are very keen to take on special responsibilities. They do this with enthusiasm and a sense of importance, but the school sometimes misses opportunities to extend this further. The school has well-established links with various business partners through the Education Business Partnership. This enables the children to participate in a good variety of activities that help them develop skills for their future lives. However, not all children feel confident to express their opinions and be involved in decision-making.

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

- Simplify school improvement planning so that it links more closely with self-evaluation and reduces bureaucracy.
- Improve the current approaches to marking and setting of targets so that children are clearer about how they need to improve their work.
- Provide more opportunities for all children to take on responsibilities, develop decision-making skills and express their views.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Many children start school with skills below those expected for their age, although a small percentage are higher. They all make impressive progress in the Reception class due to outstanding teaching. By the end of the year, standards are broadly in line with national expectations. In Key Stage 1 the school's efforts to raise standards, for example introducing group reading every day, have made a significant difference to children's achievement. Standards have continued to rise for three years. Highly effective teaching means that writing, reading and mathematics results were all higher than the national averages in this year's assessments. Developing these important basic skills is giving these children a flying start in preparation for the next stages of school and their later working lives. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2 due to positive changes that have been made to the way they are taught. Standards for English and mathematics are satisfactory and there are clear signs that these are rising. In science, progress is excellent and the school's results are very good. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress because the school provides quality support for individuals and groups. Strategies have been successful in improving the rate of progress made by boys in the school, where previously they were well behind the girls. Standards in other subject areas are satisfactory. Teachers do not always use National Curriculum levels in all subjects when planning children's progress.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Children's personal development and well-being are good. There is a climate of respect throughout the school between children and adults. The staff take time to listen and talk to children whenever needed, so children feel very safe and well cared for. Many start with considerable social and learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children are very keen to try their best. They feel valued and, as a result, their positive attitudes develop and behaviour improves. The learning mentor's work is particularly effective in providing extra support for children who need it. Parents also feel they can trust her to give them support when they feel it is needed. Children have a good understanding of health and safety issues.

They learn to make a positive contribution to their local community and the wider world through fundraising for many charities. They also take part in activities such as Forestry Commission visits out to the local area which helps them understand and care for the surrounding environment. Children develop an early understanding of the world of work that will contribute towards their future economic well-being through interesting experiences provided by the school. For example, Year 2 children talked enthusiastically about their bricklaying workshop at the local high school and remembered what they had learned in great detail!

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. Children enjoy and succeed in learning, especially those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In some classes the teaching is outstanding and that is where the children make the fastest progress. Activities in the Foundation Stage are carefully planned so that teaching is systematic and learning is great fun. In the best lessons across the school, teaching is lively and personal to each child. Teachers support children's learning by careful demonstration. For each new task, they give as much support as is needed, then gradually let the children work more independently. This approach helps to build confidence.

Well-trained classroom assistants and adult volunteers are employed effectively to support children who need extra help. As a result, they make better than expected progress. Precise positive reinforcement and praise help them to feel confident and gain self-esteem. This means that they are keen to respond and contribute in lessons.

Children learn most in lessons where there is a clear focus on what they are meant to be learning. In some lessons, however, there are missed opportunities for pupils to explain, justify and describe their methods. As a result, children's progress is slower. Teachers understand children's needs and generally allow them to be active in lessons. Not all teachers encourage the children to make choices about what they most want or need to learn. Work is marked regularly and comments are based mainly on praise

and how the pupils have worked on the task. Marking does not usually identify the next steps that children need to take to improve their learning. Regular assessments are recorded in English, mathematics and science, but the assessment information in other subjects is not always used to ensure that teachers have a clear understanding of where pupils are up to and what they need to do next.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is well planned through themes that appeal to the children. For example, a visit to see the red squirrels in Formby led to interesting activities across the curriculum the next day. This approach extended children's learning in a variety of ways by building on their interest and fun experience the day before. The curriculum is adapted to focus especially on weaker areas. For example, speaking and listening skills are a high priority for pupils who come into school with weaknesses in language and communication. Children make extremely good progress from their low starting points on entry giving them a good start to their education.

The National Curriculum is delivered through rotating themes. There is not always enough continuity between classes to ensure that pupils make good progress in foundation subjects. Learning is enriched through special themed events such as the science week, puzzle day and arts writing week. These improve children's abilities to solve problems, work cooperatively in teams and apply their knowledge in practical situations. The St Gabriel's Globe newspaper is just one example of where this has helped to develop writing and computer skills for children's future well-being.

The extensive range of visits and visitors has a very positive impact on personal and social development. For example, they learn to cooperate with pupils at other schools and also work alongside experts, such as artists, musicians and students from different parts of the world. In one good example, pupils worked alongside a Peruvian musical group and gained a great deal of knowledge about music and people from other cultures. This further helps children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which are good. Extra-curricular activities take place before school and after school and include activities such as 'fit and fun', homework, computers and languages. The activities are highly praised by pupils: they enjoy them and their achievements are boosted by their participation. The breakfast club also helps those who attend to get a nutritious start to the day.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. There is a strong ethos of care running throughout the school due to the high level of commitment of all staff. Children feel valued and safe. Arrangements for safeguarding are in place and the children say that they feel safe in school. Bullying is rare and when it does happen it is dealt with swiftly and successfully. Children who are at risk are identified at a very early stage and support is provided to ensure that they make good progress. Children are guided well in their academic work but not all classes provide opportunities for them to reflect on their

own progress and discuss what they need to do next to improve. Support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and/or poor behaviour is very good and leads to successful progress and positive behaviour for most.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is led and managed effectively and provides good value for money.

The headteacher plans extensively and the school is part of many initiatives that clearly enrich learning and lead to high quality care. Staff are highly committed and work hard to continuously improve. They are equally involved in the ongoing improvement of the school and work very well as a team. However, there are too many areas being covered at any one time. Systems for monitoring and collecting evidence are rigorous but excessive. This means that work is sometimes duplicated unnecessarily leading to a less clear focus.

The capacity to improve further is good. There is a very good track record of continuous improvement. Decisions and changes have a clear impact on the outcomes for children. Recent improvements in reading at Key Stage 1 are the direct result of careful planning and good management. The new deputy headteacher has been in post for less than a term but is already making a difference: for example, through the introduction of a replacement tracking system. All parents who returned questionnaires said that they are very happy with the school and believe that their children are happy and safe. They receive information of good quality and many are actively involved in the school's work: for example, running the breakfast club, helping in classrooms and accompanying classes on trips. Governors are supportive of the school, but attendance at meetings has been patchy. They have recently made considerable improvements to the way they operate and there are early signs that this is starting to make a difference.



**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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Inspection judgements

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | <b>School Overall</b> |
|---|-----------------------|

### 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> | 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  | 3   |
| 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>   | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> 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                              | 1 |

### 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   | 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

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 2 |
| <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.

## 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  | 2   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 3   |
| 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 very much indeed for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. Mr Torr and I enjoyed our two days of inspecting. There was a very caring atmosphere and you were all working hard. You were polite and helpful to us in all sorts of ways and we are very grateful.

We think that St Gabriel's is a good school. Mrs Naylor and the staff are always planning new ways to help you learn. The teachers are good at teaching. The younger children have really improved a lot with their reading in the last year and you are all fantastic at science! Lots of other people help you as well, like the learning mentor and teaching assistants. Those of you who find learning a bit hard get lots of help so that you can really make progress. You tell us that you enjoy school and we saw that you have very positive attitudes to lessons. We think that all the extra activities are great! The Reception class went to Formby to see the red squirrels while we were in school and we thought this was a really good way to help them learn. Your attendance at school keeps improving each year because you don't have too many days off now. Well done! This means you don't get behind with your learning.

There are three things that we think the school can do to improve even more.

- First, we have asked Mrs Naylor to help the teachers to focus on fewer new projects at any one time. We don't want them to get overloaded!
- Second, we would like the teachers to help you understand your next steps in learning through marking and targets. This will help you to understand better what to aim for next.
- Third, we think that you are all capable of taking on more responsibilities in school and learning how to make more important decisions. This will help you to express your ideas more confidently.

We hope that you will all continue to work as well as you can so that the school becomes even better! We send our very best wishes to you all for a happy and successful future.