

St Paul's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111361
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	288938
Inspection date	13 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Brian Padgett HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	106
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Cantillon
Headteacher	Mrs Deirdre Whitfield
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2002
School address	Marley Road Poynton Stockport Cheshire SK12 1LY
Telephone number	01625 871960
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Paul's is a smaller than average primary school. It serves the Catholic community within Poynton, although a number of children attend whose parents are not Catholic and/or who live outside of the village. Most children are of White British background. Recently, a small number of children from Eastern Europe have joined the school. They arrived unable to speak English. The area served by the school is advantaged socially and economically, although the proportion of children that is eligible for free school meals is similar to the national average. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need.

The school has achieved several awards in the subjects of art, sport and information and communication technology, and for promoting health and the full inclusion of children.

The school shares its site with St Paul's Pre-School. The pre-school was inspected at the same time as the school and will be the subject of a separate Ofsted report.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education with some notable strengths. It is a very welcoming school with a close sense of community. It has the wholehearted support of its parents.

In most years standards are above average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, at Years 2 and 6. This represents satisfactory achievement and progress for most pupils, although those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well, as do the small number of Polish and Latvian children who joined the school recently. Standards in English are usually in advance of standards in mathematics and science.

Teachers and teaching assistants form a dedicated and hard-working team. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and sometimes good, judged by the progress children make and the lesson observations during the inspection. Relationships between teachers and children are very good and teachers' tracking of children's learning enables them to know the levels at which children are working. The curriculum is broad, rich and exciting. The care and support for children are a strength of the school's work. One of the main reasons for parents' high degree of satisfaction with the school, cited in the returned parents' questionnaires and during interviews with inspectors, is their confidence that each member of staff knows and looks out for their child or children. The quality of care and respect for children has a significantly positive effect on their happiness at school and their enjoyment of lessons and other aspects of school life. Children's personal development is good. By Year 6 they are confident, open and articulate young people, with good personal skills, well prepared for their next stage of education. Particular support and encouragement is provided for vulnerable children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and, more recently, those with little or no English. Great care is taken to promote children's emotional well-being.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher in particular, well supported by the deputy headteacher, is responsible for creating the wonderful ethos of the school and the warm welcome extended to children, parents and visitors. Since the last inspection, significant progress has been made in tackling key issues from the last inspection, in improving systems to assess children's work and in teachers taking on leadership for the subjects of the curriculum. But some development work remains to be done. The facilities for young children in Reception class to learn through play remain weak and the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning has not been rigorous enough to secure consistently good quality. The detail of the school's self-evaluation is accurate and senior staff and governors have a very clear picture of the school's strengths and areas that require further development. However, inspectors judged the school's effectiveness as one grade lower than the school's judgement. This is because, although the school has significant strengths, children's progress in key subjects is not yet good and some issues for improvement remain after several years. The headteacher, staff and governors are very committed to the school and to its improvement and have proved they have the capacity to improve it further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage Grade: 3

The quality of provision for children in the Foundation Stage (Reception) is satisfactory. Most children entering the Reception/Year 1 class come from the adjacent St Paul's Pre-School. Links between pre-school and Reception are satisfactory and developing well. Generally, children have levels of knowledge, skills and understanding broadly typical for their age when they enter Reception. They make satisfactory progress and most are working at the level expected

for children of this age by the time they are ready to join Year 1. Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development as their development in this aspect of learning is a strength of the teaching in Reception. They make good progress in early reading and writing, where effective support has a positive impact. However, their general progress is hindered by the limited facilities and experiences to learn through play. Outdoor play is a particular problem. The outdoor play surface is shared with the pre-school and there is no covered outdoor area to permit outdoor play when the weather is bad. No support is available to the teacher to help promote learning through play during the afternoon sessions. These shortfalls in provision are of long-standing and represent an inadequate response from leadership and management because they remain unresolved.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the provision for children to learn through play in Reception.
- Through more rigorous monitoring and analysis of the effectiveness of teaching and learning, identify where improvements can be made and take effective action to raise children's achievement and improve their progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children enter Year 1 with standards that are generally broadly typical of children of this age. The number of children in each year group is small, typically about 15, so it is quite normal for standards to vary from year to year depending on the capability of the different children who make up the cohort. However, once settled, most children have a higher than average capability. They reach above average standards at the end of both key stages, at Years 2 and 6. For children of their capability, this represents satisfactory progress. Standards in English are generally higher than those in mathematics and science. Children who have difficulty learning, those with special educational needs and behaviour difficulties, for example, achieve well. The good relationships between staff and children help them feel secure and they are well supported in lessons. The children from Eastern Europe have settled very well and they are making good progress in learning English and in other subjects, such as in mathematics.

The results of the national tests (SATs) in 2006 were unusually low for the school, barely average. However, the poor performance is wholly explained by severe disruption to staffing that year and is not representative of the children's normal standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development of children is good and a strength of the school. Parents are keenly aware of the school's success in supporting children's personal and emotional development. It is something they value greatly. By the time the children are preparing to leave in Year 6, they are mature, responsible and articulate young people, who make a significant positive contribution to the school and to the wider community. Children generally enjoy school: their attendance is above average. Behaviour is good, although the relationships with teachers are so strong a minority of children finds it difficult to accept other teachers when their regular teacher is

absent. As befits a church school, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and clearly influenced by the strong commitment to the school's religious foundation. Assemblies have strong spiritual and moral content. Children are preparing well for their future well-being through taking part in regular physical activity in lessons and over the lunch hour and the work of the school council is a good example of how children are becoming effective and responsible citizens.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection and some teaching was of good quality. Teachers have very good relationships with the children in their classes. They know their children very well, usually over two years. They plan carefully to meet the children's learning needs based on an assessment of what each child knows and can do. Their expertise in assessing progress is improving. Children are often involved in reviewing progress in lessons and in setting new targets for learning. They have good attitudes to learning and generally try hard in lessons. Teaching assistance is usually effective in teaching groups of children, especially those of lower ability and those who need support with their learning. There are no obvious shortfalls in teaching quality. Teachers are very professional and are keen to be even more effective. To improve children's progress and thereby raise standards more consistency is required, so that all lessons are at least good. This should be helped by more rigorous monitoring of teaching, with analysis focused on what children are learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is of good quality. The school has been awarded several accreditations, for art, physical education and information and communication technology that recognise the quality of what the school provides for children. The basic curriculum is enriched in imaginative ways, such as the use of drama in English lessons and all children learn Spanish in Key Stage 2. A programme of lessons in personal, social and health education contributes successfully to children's personal development. As well as a varied programme of visits and visitors to the school, the school networks effectively with other local schools to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities after school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for children are good, with some exceptionally strong features. The school has robust systems for making sure children are as safe as possible. Staff are fully trained in child protection and first aid, and the school keeps its records and documentation on health and safety, safeguarding children and risk assessments fully up to date. However, as parents were keen to evidence, it is the overarching sense of care and the concern for the individual child that is so much a part of the ethos of the school, coupled with the strength of the relationships between children and staff, that underpin the school's very good care and support. The school has developed strong links with other schools, including secondary schools, and it is developing closer links with the pre-school. The good quality of support for vulnerable

children is well illustrated by the way in which the school has risen to the challenge of providing for children from Eastern Europe.

The school has established a comprehensive system of assessment so that teachers and senior staff can track children's progress and monitor, for example, whether intervention is needed if children fall behind with their work. Children are themselves increasingly involved in assessing whether they are making progress and looking ahead to what they might achieve. Although the use of all the data produced by assessments is still in the process of being developed, the school has made good progress since the last inspection, when assessment was a key issue for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory, overall. However, the school has several strengths that are due to effective aspects of leadership and management. For example, the school has an excellent ethos, set by the headteacher and her deputy headteacher, where parents and all children feel welcome and valued. This is a powerful factor for the parents in their choice of school. The school works well with all its partners, such as with local schools. Governors are well organised and support the school effectively. They are representative of the school community, as parents and past parents, and several provide professional expertise to help with school management.

The school has made improvements since the last inspection. The assessment and tracking of children's progress is helping teachers monitor the progress of each child. Teachers are now much better at managing their subject responsibilities and influencing improvement across the school. By contrast, the improvement needed in the provision for children in the Foundation Stage has not been sufficient and shortfalls mentioned at the time of the last inspection have not been fully addressed. In detail, the school has an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. The difference in judgements between the school's view of its effectiveness and that of inspectors lies in the perception of the children's achievement. Although standards are above average, more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning is required to ensure consistently good progress.

There is great commitment to the school at all levels of management and the headteacher and chair of governors lead hard-working and dedicated teams. The school has proved it has the capacity to improve.

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Annex A

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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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	3
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	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

As you know, Mrs Young and I inspected your school recently. Like all visitors to the school, we received a warm welcome. We thank you for that. Thank you also for telling us your views about the school, especially the groups of children who talked to Mrs Young, including the school council.

We decided that St Paul's provides you with a satisfactory education with a number of especially good features. These include the very welcoming feel the school has, which is due to the genuine care, respect and support given to all of you by the staff. This is greatly appreciated by your parents and the care you receive has a strong positive influence on your happiness at school and your enjoyment of school life. The school provides you with an exciting curriculum. You are making good progress with your Spanish. The school is a good place to be if you are having difficulty with your work because of the support you receive during lessons. Those of you from Poland and Latvia have made good progress since you joined; quite remarkable since you could not speak English when you arrived.

Your teachers know you well. They work very hard on your behalf. Although you normally reach above average standards in the national tests (SATs) we are convinced you can do better still, especially in mathematics and science. Therefore, we have asked Mrs Whitfield, with the governors and staff, to focus their attention on improving teaching and learning so that you achieve your very best. You must continue to work hard for all your teachers, including those who teach you when your normal teachers are absent. We have also asked that conditions for play in Reception be improved to ensure that the youngest children get the best possible start to school.

We wish you all the best for the future.