



St Paul of The Cross Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111367
Local Authority Warrington
Inspection number 288940
Inspection date 11 October 2006
Reporting inspector Jim Alexander

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Milnthorpe Road Chapel Lane, Burtonwood Warrington, Cheshire WA5 4PN
School category	Voluntary aided	Telephone number	01925 224686
Age range of pupils	4-11	Fax number	01925 221259
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Chair	Mr W Garner
Number on roll (school)	182	Headteacher	Mr Andy Cocker
Appropriate authority	The governing body		
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is situated in a village north of Warrington. Pupils come from a range of social and economic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The majority of pupils are from White British families. In 2004 the school was awarded the Primary Quality Mark in Basic Skills.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that cares for its pupils extremely well and one in which their personal development and emotional well-being flourish. Parents overwhelmingly support the work of the staff as they endeavour to get the best from each pupil. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'I believe that the full potential of children is embraced and celebrated at St Paul's'. At the heart of this successful school is the belief that everyone, staff and pupils alike, should always be presented with opportunities to say 'yes, I want to have a go at that'. This creates a very positive atmosphere, which is underpinned by a strong Catholic ethos. Consequently, pupils love coming here and appreciate the many opportunities they are given; attendance therefore is good. The success of this school is rooted in its excellent leadership and management. The headteacher inspires everyone by his passion for excellence and has built a very strong and proactive staff team. This team is constantly seeking ways to further improve what the school provides for the pupils. Staff, governors, pupils and parents each play an active role in the school's development. The senior staff know well the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They keep a close eye on pupils' performance and only make changes when needed; these are then carefully monitored to ensure that they are effective. The school has a strong track record of continuous improvement and the capacity for it to improve further is excellent. Pupils' achievement is outstanding and standards are very high. All pupils are set challenging targets in relation to their abilities and starting points. Pupils are actively involved in assessing their own progress in English and mathematics. They regularly discuss with their teachers the next step required to further improve their work. This process begins in Reception and continues throughout their time in school and inspires pupils to do well. Children start school in Reception with standards that are broadly as expected for their age and, by the end of Year 6, standards are significantly above average in all core subjects. This demonstrates the outstanding progress made by pupils during their time at school. The school provides a good curriculum that is varied and well balanced. Teachers plan effective links between subjects, providing pupils with opportunities to apply what they have learned in one subject to a wide range of experiences. Visits, visitors and other special events enrich the pupils' learning well. A wide range of clubs and after-school activities further enhance the curriculum. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about judo, fencing and the school choir, for example. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good and pupils make good progress in all the areas of learning. They have opportunities from an early age to initiate their own learning, moving confidently from one carefully planned activity to another; however, opportunities for learning outdoors are restricted due to the lack of a suitably designated weatherproofed area specifically for the Foundation Stage curriculum. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they are extremely considerate of the needs of those around them. They have good role models and mirror the care shown to them by the staff. The school prepares pupils very well for adult life by providing many opportunities for them to take responsibilities and put their ideas into action. Pupils were keen to discuss how they raise funds for various charities and demonstrate their understanding of those less fortunate than themselves. The school does all that is necessary to ensure

that the pupils are safe. Pupils talk knowledgeably about how to stay fit and eat healthy. The high quality and excellent range of school meals are much appreciated: one pupil said, 'Lunches are great here, they're different every day, but you always get something great!' The many sporting opportunities help pupils to lead active lives and develop good habits for the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for the children in the Foundation Stage to learn outdoors.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The range of children's abilities is varied at the start of Reception but overall standards are broadly average. Children make good progress during their first year at the school and by the time they start Year 1 the vast majority have reached the goals set for their age. By the end of Year 2, pupils attain significantly above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics; this represents very good progress given their starting points. By the end of Year 6, pupils consistently reach standards that are well above average. In 2006, mathematics results were especially high, reflecting the work undertaken by the school to develop ways in which pupils solve problems. This had rightly been identified as an area needing further improvement and the action taken by the leadership team proved very effective. From children's starting points in Reception to when they transfer to high school, pupils make exceptional progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the carefully focused work provided and the effective support of well deployed teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

At the heart of this effective school is the way in which pupils' self-esteem and confidence is developed. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and they develop a good awareness of the richness and diversity of world faiths and cultures, whilst building on strong Catholic foundations. Pupils' behaviour is excellent; they respect themselves, others around them and their school. They understand that they are well cared for and at school to learn; consequently, their personal development thrives. Pupils love coming to school and appreciate what the school offers. They say, 'Our teachers do a great job' and 'We have good friends at school and get to do really fun things in our lessons.' They know who to turn to when upset. One pupil explained, 'Our teachers sort our problems out quickly, we know that they will help us and that makes a difference.' The school council provides pupils with opportunities to voice their opinions and make a difference in their school. Pupils know how to stay fit and healthy; numerous high quality sporting activities and fresh fruit provided at break times establish good habits.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is outstanding and, as a result, pupils enjoy learning and make exceptional progress. Teachers work hard and successfully make learning challenging and great fun. Pupils are encouraged from an early age to be independent and initiate their own learning. This helps them tremendously to be motivated and self-disciplined. In a Year 1 English lesson, for example, all the pupils were working in groups of two or three with finger puppets, developing ideas for story writing. While the class teacher worked closely with one group, others were absorbed in their discussions about how to develop an exciting story. The school makes good use of local schools and the services of advanced skills teachers to support its good work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and given full access to what is happening in the lessons; consequently, they make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a curriculum that is broad, balanced and rich. Teachers use an exciting range of approaches to make learning interesting and exciting. For example, fruit grown in the school garden was picked and used to make apple muffins. This provided a range of opportunities to weigh, measure, plan, follow instructions, design packaging and of course experience the pleasure of testing! A wide variety of after-school clubs ensures that pupils have the opportunity to try things they may otherwise not get the chance to do, fencing for example. Good use is made of specialist teachers from other schools; Spanish is part of the curriculum for all of the older pupils during the school day. From the youngest age, children are provided with a wide range of activities in a well organised and stimulating environment. The provision for outdoor learning in the Foundation Stage is however underdeveloped.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The commitment of staff to pupils' care, guidance and support is a distinctive feature of the school. The care offered and the development of pupils' emotional well-being form a firm foundation to the strong ethos in school. The support for their academic progress is also very good. Adults are always available to help and pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own progress. Those with learning difficulties are supported well. The school is now further developing the support and guidance offered to those pupils identified with particular gifts and talents. Procedures for safeguarding pupils follow the latest government recommendations and procedures to ensure everyone's health and safety are robust.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. There is no complacency here, rather a buzzing endeavour as the school moves from strength to strength. The effective partnerships that have been developed with the local authority and other schools are a distinctive feature of this superb leadership. This strongly supports the work of the school. Governors play an active role in both challenging and encouraging the school. They manage the budget wisely and to good effect; consequently, the school provides outstanding value for money. Teachers responsible for specific subjects bring a drive and determination to ensure that higher standards are sought. The recent work undertaken by the mathematics coordinator typifies this commitment. A relative weakness was discovered in how pupils were taught to solve number problems; in partnership with several other schools, good practice was shared and a new initiative was introduced. Such changes have led to more effective teaching and learning. The school is in a strong position to further improve and its capacity to do so is excellent.

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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?	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

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	2

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	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	2

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?	2
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	2
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 very much indeed for giving me such a warm welcome when I came to inspect your school. I enjoyed spending a day with you because there was such a happy and hard working atmosphere in your school. I think your school is wonderful and that the headteacher, the staff and you all work extremely hard to make it that way.

Here are some of the things that make your school so special.

- You all work so hard that your standards get better and better every year.
- You all have targets to help improve your English and mathematics work.
- Your behaviour and how you care for one another is fantastic, even when there is thunder, lightning and pouring rain!
- You settle down to your work so very well and concentrate on the task in hand, and this really does help in the excellent progress you make.
- Your headteacher, teachers, governors and you are very good at deciding on new ideas that will help make school life even better.
- You have a great number of clubs and activities provided for you.
- You have a great choice of food and you know how to keep healthy and make good choices.

I have asked the school to provide more opportunities for the children in the Reception class to learn outdoors: that way your school will be even better than it is now.

I do wish you all a happy and successful future and I know that St Paul of the Cross Catholic Primary School has given you a very good start in life.