

# St Columba's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112364
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	289260
<b>Inspection date</b>	6 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joy Byrom

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	206
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Steve Donnan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Pat Hurley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 January 2003
<b>School address</b>	Church Lane Barrow-in-Furness Cumbria LA14 3AD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01229 471522
<b>Fax number</b>	01229 471522

---

<b>Age group</b>	4-11
<b>Inspection date</b>	6 May 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	289260

---

© Crown copyright 2008

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 an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- Foundation Stage provision
- Achievement in English, particularly at Key Stage 2
- The quality of care, guidance and support and its impact on pupils' personal development and well-being.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, discussions with staff and pupils, the examination of pupils' work, school assessment data and documentation including the school's self-evaluation. The views of parents were taken into account. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

This average sized school serves an almost entirely White British population. It is situated on Walney Island adjacent to Barrow-in-Furness and takes its pupils from Walney and Barrow Islands. Socio-economic circumstances are broadly average. Most pupils who join the school in Reception have attended nursery or had playgroup experience. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average although very few have a statement for special educational needs. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

St Columba's is an excellent school where pupils consistently reach standards well above average, and their achievements and personal development are outstanding. Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, the school strives for excellence in all aspects of its work. Parents are delighted with the happy family atmosphere and the love and care which engulf each child from the moment they start school. Every pupil's needs are addressed with understanding, rigour and commitment by a very dedicated team of teachers and teaching assistants; nothing is too much trouble. The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is exemplary. All required child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place.

Pupils are very proud of their school and are very keen to share it with visitors. They enjoy all aspects of school life and throw themselves into work and play with equal enthusiasm. Their attendance is above average and unauthorised absence is extremely rare. They know how to keep themselves safe and healthy. By the time they leave school pupils are confident, friendly and articulate, with good independent learning skills. They are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education because they have very good numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills and excellent attitudes to learning. They work well in teams and groups and are very aware of the needs of others. Being kind to one another is a central theme that the pupils regularly refer to and try very hard to live up to. Their spiritual development is outstanding and pupils' Christian faith is very evident in their work. One pupil remarked, 'Jesus is at the centre of all we do.' Moral, social and cultural development is also very strong. Pupils respect other faiths and cultures and are very aware of world poverty and environmental issues. Pupils of all ages take care of each other and are keen to take on responsibility. Older pupils undergo leadership training so that they can contribute effectively as prefects and playground leaders. All age groups contribute to the 'Eco Group', an energy and water saving initiative. Pupils are fully involved in their school's link with a local special school and work with pupils from there every Friday afternoon. Pupils also work with Reception pupils as prayer partners and participate in all church events. Their charity work is very strong and includes fund raising for projects in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Children make a good start in the Reception class and enter Year 1 with skills typical for their age along with good personal and social development. Pupils make outstanding progress in Years 1 and 2 because of very good teaching and support. By the end of Key Stage 1, they have reached standards significantly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in mathematics are exceptionally high and, in 2007, half the year group achieved above average levels. These high standards are maintained through Key Stage 2. Overall standards have been significantly above average for the past five years. In 2007, standards at the end of Year 6 were above average in English and science and exceptionally high in mathematics. In science and mathematics, higher attaining pupils did particularly well with half of the year group achieving above average levels in mathematics and two-thirds achieving at these higher levels in science. The latter represents excellent improvement in science since the last inspection. In 2007, pupils' achievement through Key Stage 2 was outstanding and the school was rated in the top 10% of schools nationally. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also made outstanding progress because of the excellent support they receive. Current standards in the school vary slightly from year to year as some year groups

have more pupils with special educational needs, but pupils' achievement remains consistently high. Boys and girls achieve equally well.

Pupils achieve so well because teaching and learning are consistently of a very high quality. The highly skilled staff have excellent knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn and constantly seek ways to further develop their skills. Teachers use assessment data effectively to plan their lessons to meet individual needs. The school puts extra resources into funding teaching assistants so that all ability groups receive high quality targeted support. As a result, pupils feel very well supported by their teachers. They know their targets and are involved in their own assessment which helps them to understand how to improve. Marking is thorough and informative and pupils' progress is monitored regularly by the staff. Lessons are fun because of lively delivery, varied activities including practical and group work and plenty of opportunities for discussion. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships are excellent. Pupils make a significant contribution to their own learning through their excellent behaviour and their eagerness to learn. Their learning is delivered through a very well planned curriculum which promotes high standards and outstanding personal development. There are good opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy skills in other areas of the curriculum resulting in high standards, particularly in religious education and history. The spiritual dimension to their work is particularly evident in the excellent art work of all year groups. The good range of sporting and other activities contributes well to pupils' enjoyment and commitment. The school is particularly successful in both football and orienteering.

The success of the school is a product of excellent leadership and management over several years. The headteacher's leadership is outstanding and pupils, staff, governors and parents alike hold her in the highest esteem. She is very well supported by a very enthusiastic and hardworking team who share her vision for high standards within a loving, Christian framework. The school is rigorous in its monitoring of teaching and learning as it seeks to improve every aspect of the learning process, which includes taking pupils' views into account. Staff and governors contribute to the school's thorough and accurate self-evaluation, although the school is modest in its assessment of its overall success. Appropriately challenging targets are set for pupils' achievement. The school has excellent links with local nurseries, playgroups and schools. Science teaching is enhanced by strong links with the local specialist science college. Links with the local authority are strong and the school has contributed its expertise in literacy, science and primary leadership to the local authority school improvement programme. Governors are committed and well informed. They carry out their responsibilities effectively. Staff and resources are extremely well deployed and the school gives excellent value for money. The school has shown through its improvement in science and Foundation Stage provision, its consistently high standards over several years, and its rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning that it has an excellent capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision for the Foundation Stage has improved well since the last inspection and is now good. Children make good progress in Reception because of good teaching based on purposeful practical activities that show a good understanding of how children learn. Assessment is used very well to ensure that activities are matched to each child's needs and that appropriate support is given. The bright, well-equipped classroom provides a safe and stimulating learning environment. There is a small soft-play area outside with a limited range of equipment which provides a restricted range of outdoor learning and physical activities. Children start school

with skills which are typical for their age. By the end of the Foundation Stage most reach and some exceed the goals expected of five-year-olds. Personal and social development flourishes because of the excellent quality of care and guidance provided not only by the staff but also by older pupils. This builds confidence and ensures each child feels special.

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

- Further develop facilities for outdoor learning for children in the Foundation Stage.

**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).**

## Annex A

## 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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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

<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.



## Annex A

**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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	2
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**

7 May 2008

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Columba's Catholic Primary School, Cumbria, LA14 3AD

I very much enjoyed my inspection of your school. Thank you for making me so welcome and sharing your work and ideas about the school with me.

You go to an outstanding school. No wonder you are so proud of it and your parents are so happy with your progress. You have an exceptional headteacher who leads the school brilliantly. You are very well taught and your teachers look after you exceptionally well. You, of course, play your part in making the school outstanding. Your behaviour is excellent and you are very enthusiastic about your learning. As a result, you reach high standards and make fantastic progress. You work hard and play hard. Congratulations to the football teams who have done so well in the Barrow Schools' Championships!

I was very impressed by how caring you are and how you do your best to look after each other and take on responsibilities. I was very pleased to hear from you that there is very little bullying and that you feel very safe and happy at school. Your school provides you with a superb range of experiences such as your work with children from the special school; you are very privileged to have this wonderful opportunity.

Children in Reception make good progress and quickly develop social skills. You set a good example to them and help them in lots of ways such as being their prayer partners. The school is planning to improve the outdoor play area when there is enough money to pay for it so that the younger children have more opportunities to learn outside.

Work hard and have fun, just as you are already doing. Good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joy Byrom

Lead inspector