

St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124359
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	292970
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Frances Gillam

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	426
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Dykes
Headteacher	Nathan Price
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2002
School address	Church Lane Wolstanton Newcastle ST5 0EF
Telephone number	01782 296140
Fax number	01782 296139

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Wulstan's is larger than the average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is lower than in most schools. Almost all pupils come from a White British background. A small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, a few of whom are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is lower than average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Wulstan's is a good school, where pupils achieve well in their work and reach above average standards by Year 6. Pupils enjoy school and their behaviour is extremely good. They are friendly and polite and take good care of themselves and others. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They make sensible choices about what they eat and take regular exercise because of the good emphasis the school places on developing healthy lifestyles. Pupils make a good contribution to the community. They respect and improve their environment through activities such as recycling schemes and the gardening club. Care, guidance and support are good and parents are right to feel their children are safeguarded properly and well cared for. Pupils who struggle with their work are quickly identified and receive well focused support. Staff value pupils' efforts and this helps pupils to work hard and grow in confidence but pupils do not always receive good enough information about how well they are doing and how they can improve their work and do even better.

Good provision in the Foundation Stage enables children to make a positive start. Children's attainment on entry to the Nursery is broadly as expected. They achieve well and almost all attain or exceed the goals for their age by the time they enter Year 1. Good teaching and learning help pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups, to make good progress. Teachers make good use of resources such as interactive whiteboards to capture pupils' interest and to make clear to pupils what they are going to learn. Lessons in English provide a good balance between listening, talking about things and pupils doing things for themselves. Pupils enjoy this mix of activities and this leads to good levels of involvement and good quality work. Pupils though, could be doing better in mathematics. Sometimes activities are too easy, especially for the more able pupils, and there are too few opportunities for pupils to use mental strategies to investigate and solve mathematical problems. The good curriculum provides a wide range of interesting activities, including sports and music clubs and residential visits, which support pupils' learning and their personal development and well-being successfully.

Good leadership and management ensure that staff and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This ensures that the right action is taken to bring about change for the better and this has led to good improvement since the last inspection. These features show that the school has a good capacity to improve further. Improvement has been particularly successful in English and information and communication technology (ICT) but the school recognises it has yet to improve the achievement of girls in mathematics. Though pupils have some good ideas about how their learning and their school could be made better, and they are eager to share them, there are too few opportunities for them to do this.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure pupils, especially the more able and girls, are challenged to do their best in mathematics and are given better opportunities to use mental strategies to calculate and solve problems.
- Make sure teachers provide better information for pupils about how well they are doing and how they can improve their work further.
- Make sure pupils have a greater say in how their learning and their school can be improved.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average by the time pupils leave the school. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress because basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are taught well. By the time they enter Year 1 most achieve or exceed the goals for their age. This positive start is capitalised upon and pupils from Years 1 to 6 continue to make good progress. The school sets challenging targets for the end of Year 6 tests. Provisional test scores in 2007 in English are the best the school has achieved. This is because the focus on raising pupils' achievement in English has been particularly successful. Pupils say the work in English is interesting and how much they enjoy a challenge. This leads to good quality work but this is not always the case in mathematics. Pupils, especially the more able and girls, find the work less interesting in mathematics and some rather repetitive and mundane activities do not always challenge pupils to do their best or to use what they already know to solve calculations and figure out problems.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, classrooms are calm and pupils work very well together. Pupils know about healthy lifestyles and make good choices about their diet and take regular exercise. They act sensibly in and around school and have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils have very good relationships with adults and show a high level of care for themselves and others. These, along with the very high standard of behaviour, contribute successfully to pupils' enjoyment of school and their good attendance. Pupils contribute well to the wider community and have a strong sense of how they can help and support others less fortunate than themselves. Although the school council meets regularly, representatives are capable of taking on greater responsibility for the management of the council and pupils generally say they would like more opportunities to share their views, especially about what they are learning. Pupils have a very good awareness of the need to be responsible citizens through their work in fair trade initiatives and recycling schemes. By the time they leave school, pupils are articulate and confident and these features, together with the pupils' well developed literacy and numeracy skills, prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

In the Foundation Stage children are happy and settled. Good planning, especially in the Reception classes, provides activities that interest the children and motivate them to learn. These activities enable children to do well and make a positive start to school. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' learning is supported well by good working relationships and the way staff value and praise pupils' efforts, though marking is not always helpful in moving pupils on with their learning. Learning support assistants work well with pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Their calm and patient approach builds confidence and encourages these pupils to do their best. Interactive whiteboards are an integral part of teaching and pupils find the visual explanations of what they are going to learn very helpful. Teachers have worked hard and

implemented successfully strategies to improve pupils' learning in English. Pupils find English lessons exciting and understand why and how the things they are learning can help them in later life. They do not, however, always see the relevance of what they are taught in mathematics, especially the girls who do not always do as well as other pupils. In addition, teachers' planning does not always cater well enough for the different ability groups in mathematics, particularly the more able.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils, including children in the Foundation Stage, experience a wide range of interesting learning activities, which for the most part build well on what pupils have done before, though this is not always the case in mathematics. A wide range of clubs and events outside normal lessons, including sports and gardening clubs and residential visits, support pupils' personal development and well-being successfully. Links between subjects make best use of teaching time, especially for developing writing skills. Considerable improvements to the provision for ICT have led to better progress for pupils in this area.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

One parent summarised the views of many others with their comment, 'St Wulstan's is a family friendly school, where my children do well.' This is a happy school and parents are right to feel the school cares for and helps their children to do well. Good child protection procedures and the high level of care pupils receive ensure they feel safeguarded and free from harm. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good and the school carefully tracks how well pupils are doing. Teachers use this information to group pupils by ability and to set targets for improvement. In Year 1, teachers share these targets regularly with pupils but this is not always the case in other year groups and so most pupils are not always sure of how well they are doing and how they can improve their work further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior managers and governors identify the right priorities for improvement and the action to bring about change for the better is successful. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and pupils' achievements have improved in English. The school has good systems to monitor and evaluate its work and these provide senior managers, staff and governors with a clear view of the school's effectiveness. These include evaluations of teaching, analysis of data and pupils' work but are yet to include discussions with pupils to canvas their views about their school and to give them a real say in how things can be made better. Children at St Wulstan's are perceptive and they have some good ideas, for example, about how mathematics lessons could be made more interesting and how the school can further strengthen their awareness of healthy lifestyles.

The school works very well with parents, who have confidence in the headteacher, senior managers and governors. They support the school well and play an active part in their children's learning.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	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	1
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?	2
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?	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	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

6 July 2007

Dear Children,

Inspection of St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School, Wolstanton, ST5 0EF

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. The inspection team really enjoyed meeting you.

Here are some of the good things we found about your school:

- You have a good school and the people in charge and your teachers do a good job.
- You do well in your work and reach above average standards by the time you leave the school.
- You enjoy school and your attendance is good.
- You are friendly and polite and you behave extremely well; this helps to make your school a happy place to be.
- You are well looked after and you take good care of yourselves. You make sensible choices about what you eat and take plenty of exercise.
- You care for your environment and are kind to those less fortunate than yourselves.

To improve the school still further we have asked the people in charge and your teachers to work together on three things:

- To make sure you do your very best in mathematics and that you have better opportunities to use your mental skills to calculate and solve problems.
- To make sure your teachers give you better information about how well you are doing and how you can do even better.
- To make sure you have a greater say in how you learn and how your school can be improved.

Keep up the hard work!

With best wishes for the future,

Fran Gillam Lead Inspector