



Our Lady and St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124367
Local Authority Staffordshire
Inspection number 292974
Inspection date 17 October 2006
Reporting inspector John Eadie

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Seabridge Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Clayton
Age range of pupils	3–11		Newcastle-under-Lyme ST5 4AG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 297451
Number on roll (school)	236	Fax number	01782 297456
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	B Bester
		Headteacher	J Devine
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This average-sized school serves the Catholic and local community on the southern edge of Newcastle under Lyme. Although socio-economic indicators for the area are broadly average, the school draws from a wider area with a more varied socio-economic mix. There is a broadly average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. Most pupils are of White British heritage, although a few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The school opened a nursery two years ago.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

It is easy to see why this school is so popular with parents as it is an outstanding school. Pupils' achievement is outstanding and they reach high standards. Children join the Nursery class with levels of skills and knowledge below those expected for children of their age. They make an excellent start in the Nursery and Reception classes and the foundations are carefully laid for the outstanding progress that is made as they move through the school.

Key elements in the success of the school are its excellent leadership and management and the hard work and dedication of the staff. This has a significant impact on pupils' achievement. Analysis of performance in the national tests is particularly effective as it has led to strategies being implemented to raise standards. An exceptional example of this is a project started last year, in partnership with four local specialist high schools, to provide a weekly session to really challenge the more able pupils. The school extended this provision further by starting a challenging programme for those not going to the extra lessons. The effectiveness of this work is seen in the huge increase in the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in the national tests last term.

Pupils are learning outstandingly well because teaching is excellent. Teachers make their lessons lively and interesting and as a result, pupils are engrossed in, and enthusiastic about, their work. The excellent curriculum also contributes very strongly to pupils' motivation to learn because it has been designed to excite them. Pupils and their parents are very appreciative of the 'wide variety of extra activities, such as visiting artists, poets and musicians and outings', that are built into the curriculum. Systems of academic support and guidance are amply fulfilling their purpose of checking on pupils' progress and helping in the setting of useful targets for pupils' learning. Those for English and mathematics, however, do not provide pupils and their teachers with sufficient information on what pupils need to do to improve their work.

One parent described the school as having a 'warm, friendly and vibrant environment', which epitomises the excellent care, guidance and support provided for the pupils. This leads to pupils' outstanding personal development. Pupils are caring and considerate, often going the extra mile to be helpful and polite. A notable feature is the way that all pupils, whatever their background, are treated as equals by pupils and staff alike. New pupils, particularly those from overseas, quickly find friends. Pupils have a mature understanding of the need to stay healthy and safe and put this understanding into practice in their daily lives. The high attendance rates are ample evidence of pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils willingly and sensibly take on responsibilities such as acting as buddies in the playground or looking after equipment. Pupils, by taking on these tasks as well as the active role of the school council, are making a very positive contribution to the smooth running of the school. Rapidly developing skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, in addition to the skills of teamwork and independent learning encouraged by teachers, are ensuring that pupils are very well prepared for their future. A good example of this is the regular bring-and-buy sales organised by pupils from Years 3 to 6.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils have precise individual targets in English and mathematics so that they and their teachers know what they need to learn next.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve outstandingly well and make excellent progress to reach high standards by the time they leave. Children make excellent progress in the Nursery and Reception classes to achieve standards a little above those expected by the time they start in Year 1. This excellent progress continues through Years 1 and 2 and pupils reach standards that are significantly above average in the national tests at the end of Year 2. Progress in Years 3 to 6 is also outstanding. In the tests in 2006, almost all pupils gained the higher Level 5 in science and at least two thirds gained this level in English and mathematics. The results in these tests also demonstrate the outstanding progress made by pupils with learning difficulties as all made the expected Level 4 in all three subjects.

Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English also make outstanding progress, as a very careful programme of learning English is put in place for them as soon as they arrive in the school. Within this very positive picture, the school has correctly analysed that standards in writing were relatively weaker than in other subjects but, following very effective work to address this, standards rose very significantly in the national tests this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The very close links with the parish and the weekly Mass held in church make a strong contribution to their spiritual development. Pupils enjoy a wide range of cultural experiences, enhanced by visits from members of the local community to share their own cultures. Moral and social development have a high priority in the school and pupils are developing a fine awareness of their place in society. Behaviour is excellent and pupils are very polite and welcoming to visitors, making every effort to ensure that they find their way around. Pupils say that there is a little minor bullying but stress that this is dealt with very effectively. The base for this outstanding personal development is built extremely well in the Nursery and Reception classes. Children in these classes rapidly learn to share and take turns and make sensible choices.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

'The best thing about my school is the teachers', said a pupil. This type of accolade is given because teachers make every effort to build relationships with their pupils and get to know them and their needs. They plan their lessons to be interesting and teach in a lively way. Pupils respond really well, enjoying their learning and helping create an atmosphere of orderly endeavour and enthusiasm about the classrooms. The youngest children in the Nursery and Reception classes quickly establish routines of working hard and listening carefully to instructions. Teachers throughout the school use questioning very well to extend pupils' understanding and plan a variety of activities so that interest is maintained. For example, in a science lesson, pupils had to walk across the surface of a paddling pool full of custard to demonstrate how reversible changes can alter the properties of materials. Teaching assistants play their full role in aiding pupils' learning, particularly for those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those learning English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum has been carefully planned to make the most of the time available, often by using the links between subjects very well. Despite spending more than the recommended time on physical education, there is no loss of balance in the timetables. There are a good number of extra activities. For example, there is specialist teaching of music and French, the latter as a result of one of the links with local secondary schools. This specialist teaching is having a significant impact on pupils' learning in these subjects. A very thorough programme is in place to develop pupils' understanding of staying healthy and safe. The school uses the expertise of health professionals and other visitors very effectively to support this. This has a real impact on the pupils' interest and their understanding of these issues.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding personal development is due to the excellent pastoral care that all adults in the school provide. Each child and their parents and carers are known well and parents talk fondly of the support that whole families receive from the school. As one parent said, 'Any concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively'. Vulnerable groups are particularly vigilantly monitored. For example, a very careful watch is kept on those who do not speak English as their first language to ensure that they are able to enjoy the same provision as their classmates. Academic guidance and support is developing rapidly. Very careful records are kept of pupils' progress, although these are being refined still further to enable managers to see, at a glance, levels of progress. Targets are set for pupils' progress in many subjects but those for English and

mathematics do not adequately tell pupils and teachers what it is they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school evaluates itself very effectively. The process is very thorough and involves questionnaires for parents and pupils as well as input from all staff and governors. From all these stakeholders, very clear plans are drawn up for future improvements. All this results in the evident progress that the school is making in improving provision for pupils and raising standards. For example, as a result of the views of parents and staff, the school has implemented a number of changes to raise the profile of healthy eating. These have included banning crisps and chocolate as snacks and reducing salt and processed food in cooked meals.

The issues from the previous inspection have been addressed well and, with this progress and the very evident drive to continue to develop, the school is very well placed to continue to improve. There is no complacency here.

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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	1
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	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 behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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

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	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	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 so much for welcoming me to your school. I really enjoyed my time with you and seeing how hard you work. Particular thanks for the pictures which some of you drew or painted for me. Many of you told me how much you enjoy your school and you are right to be proud of it as it an outstanding school.

These are the best things about your school

- You work hard and are making excellent progress and reaching high standards.
- Your teachers make your lessons interesting and often exciting and other adults help you to learn very well.
- You are very polite and helpful and I was very impressed with your behaviour, which is excellent.
- The curriculum is excellent and you enjoy lots of interesting visits and visitors, which help your learning enormously.
- All adults take very good care of you and you are learning very well how to stay healthy and safe.
- Your headteacher and other staff know clearly how they want to make the school even better.

There is only one thing that I have suggested that they might improve

- The targets set for you in English and maths are not as helpful as they could be in letting you know exactly how to improve your work.

Best wishes, and keep up the good work.