



Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Hindley Green

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 130955
Local Authority Wigan
Inspection number 293676
Inspection dates 25–26 September 2006
Reporting inspector John Heap

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Swan Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Hindley Green, Wigan
Age range of pupils	4–11		Lancashire WN2 4HD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01942 767768
Number on roll (school)	204	Fax number	01942 521742
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs M Miller
		Headteacher	Mr M Caine
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2003		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a broadly average sized primary school that serves a residential area with some signs of disadvantage. Almost all pupils are White British and a small number are entitled to a free school meal. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average and an above average number have Statements of Special Educational Needs. There is a very small group of looked after pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that it provides a satisfactory quality of education and gives sound value for money. Inspectors also agree that there are strengths in the personal development of pupils. This is brought about by a number of significant factors: the good commitment to care and guidance, excellent relationships between staff and pupils and the supportive ethos that is promoted by the sound leadership and management of the school.

Parents are very pleased that the school has these strengths and one parent's view is typical: 'The school has a wonderful family feeling. The staff couldn't do any more than they do. My daughter can't wait to get to school, she enjoys it so much.' Pupils clearly enjoy school and say so. The satisfactory curriculum has strong elements, particularly in the promotion of healthy and safe living. Pupils respond well to this and regard the school as a safe and secure place to be. Furthermore, there are strong enrichment activities, such as the much appreciated residential visits to France. The school council contributes well to the school community and pupils have a widening view of important issues such as the increasing diversity of society and the need to safeguard the environment.

Pupils get a sound start in the Foundation Stage (Reception) and make satisfactory progress towards the national expectations for children of this age. By the end of Years 2 and 6, overall standards are above average. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall because gains in writing are less than in other subjects. Recent improvements in the school's sound self-evaluation procedures include much more rigorous tracking of pupils' achievements and better monitoring of lessons. The greater rigour means that the school is correctly aware of underachievement in writing compared to reading standards, particularly for the higher attaining pupils, and also the insufficient use of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) in order to further develop pupils' basic skills.

Information gathered and shared about pupils' achievements has led to improved lesson planning. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent because teachers do not always comment directly about how successfully pupils have met their individual targets. All of this means that the matching of work to all pupils' needs is not fully effective, particularly in writing. Basic skills are taught adequately and pupils are well prepared for their future learning in reading, mathematics and science. The headteacher and his deputy have recognised the good sense of knowing in great detail how the pupils are doing academically. They are now much clearer about how to address underachievement in writing. School improvement planning identifies appropriate priorities but the capacity to improve further is only satisfactory as the plan is not sufficiently sharp in identifying planned actions. Subject coordinators do a satisfactory job but their influence on provision is weakened by too few opportunities to monitor teaching and learning. The governing body supports the school well, but their systems and practices to monitor the school's work are not fully developed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in writing, particularly for the highest attaining pupils.
- Increase the use of literacy, numeracy and ICT across the full range of subjects in order to develop pupils' basic skills.
- Improve the sharpness of improvement planning, develop the role of subject coordinators and improve the quality of governance in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and progress are satisfactory. Pupils' attainment on entry to Reception is variable year on year but broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils enter Year 1 at nationally expected levels after having made sound progress in the Foundation Stage. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are above average and sound teaching promotes satisfactory progress. The trend in the Year 6 results is above the national one. Achievement is best in reading, mathematics and science. Recent provisional results in national tests confirm this picture, particularly the lower writing results in Year 2. There is underachievement in writing compared with reading, particularly for the higher attaining pupils, throughout the school. The Year 6 targets for 2006 were mainly met and those for 2007 are suitably realistic and challenging.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those looked after by the local authority make satisfactory progress. They benefit from satisfactory support and from the improving procedures for tracking pupils' achievements.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. As a result, pupils are sensitive to others' needs and cultures. Reflective assemblies contribute well to this development. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the responsibilities given to them, such as being 'playground leaders' and 'classroom buddies'. Attendance remains a little below average despite the school's best efforts. The school council enables pupils to contribute effectively to decision-making, such as deciding which playground markings and use of equipment would be fair. Pupils' self-confidence and collaborative working skills are good. They are effectively developed by projects such as 'work enterprise' that prepare them well for what the future brings. They make a good contribution to local communities and those far away through charity fundraising events.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Satisfactory teaching and learning typically includes a number of key features. There are exemplary relationships between staff and pupils and, as a result, pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to work hard and do their best. Classroom management is good and promotes excellent behaviour and there are very few disruptions to learning. Teaching assistants are skilful and ensure that vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to others in the school. In the Foundation Stage, lessons are well organised and are particularly effective in promoting pupils' personal and social development.

However, higher attaining pupils are not always given work which challenges them to improve their writing skills and ensure that they reach higher standards. This is because teachers do not match work precisely enough to individual needs. Teachers are increasingly confident in the use of ICT but the current lack of resources means that access to and development of skills is limited.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the needs of the majority of pupils. It meets local and national requirements but there are shortcomings in the use of literacy, numeracy and ICT in other subjects. Consequently, the development of pupils' skills in these areas is held back. Pupils' personal development is catered for well. Pupils say how much they enjoy taking part in musical and sporting events and visiting places of interest. These develop their creative and sporting talents well. A range of activities both within and outside the school day are very popular and enjoyed by the pupils, including learning French. Good links with the local parish church and communities in need help pupils to appreciate their place in the wider community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the care and support is summed up by one parent who wrote, 'This school is one of the best around and by miles the safest.' Robust procedures for child protection and assessing any risks to pupils are fully in place. Pupils trust staff to look after them and report that they always have someone they can talk to if they have worries. There are very effective links made with parents and a wide range of local agencies to safeguard the needs of the most vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff regularly meet with parents and members of external agencies to plan the support required and to review progress. Good induction procedures help Reception children settle happily into school routines. Procedures and practices to track pupils' achievements are increasingly effective.

Despite shortcomings in marking and the link with learning targets, pupils are becoming clearer about what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that leadership and management are satisfactory. The experienced and highly caring headteacher gives strong leadership in several areas, for example, in promoting good care, guidance and support for all pupils, in particular those who are vulnerable. The school also provides parents with a lot of helpful information, including guidance on the curriculum, which is much appreciated. The leadership also gives clear and strong judgements to teachers about the quality of their teaching. As a result, individual teachers' skills are being developed.

The deputy headteacher provides good support, particularly in improving assessment procedures and practices. This partnership has ensured that the school has made sufficient improvement since the last inspection. The work of subject coordinators is satisfactory. Their influence on raising standards is weakened by not having opportunities to watch lessons and see what is going on day to day. This is particularly the case in writing. School improvement planning properly identifies priorities but not a sharp enough path to success. Consequently, the capacity to improve further is satisfactory. Governors support the school as well as they are able. Their procedures and practices for evaluating the school and its work have shortcomings. Financial management is prudent. The school has adequate procedures for obtaining value for money in its dealings.

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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?	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	3

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	3
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	3

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?	3
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.

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	3
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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and being in your school this week. We are very grateful for your warm welcome, courtesy and the help you provided. Please give a special thanks to those who talked with us.

What we really liked about your school:

- the excellent behaviour and relationships you develop with all in the school
- your good attitudes to school
- the way that you all contribute to an effective, safe and caring atmosphere in the school
- the good range of activities that enrich your curriculum
- the effective way the school communicates with home and the support the school receives from home
- that parents of the youngest children are pleased with the arrangements to bring their child into school.

We have asked your teachers to make sure that your writing improves. You can be a great help by always doing your best work and following the advice from your teachers. We have also suggested that you have even more opportunities to use your literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects.

The inspection team wishes you well and good luck for the future.