



St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School Wigan

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131228
Local Authority Wigan
Inspection number 293725
Inspection dates 29–30 January 2007
Reporting inspector Jim Crouch

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Thorburn Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Norley Hall, Wigan
Age range of pupils	4–11		Lancashire WN5 9LW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01942 222721
Number on roll (school)	315	Fax number	01942 700694
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Ruth Fisher
		Headteacher	Mr J Bruen
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–11	29–30 January 2007	293725

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The number of pupils in this large school increased significantly in 2004, as a result of taking in pupils from a nearby school which closed. It serves areas which experience high levels of socio-economic deprivation. The majority of the pupils are White British. Currently, a small number of children from asylum-seeking families attend the school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but the proportion with a statement of special education need is below average. The school provides a wide range of extended childcare services, including separately funded baby and toddler and pre-school facilities. It has held the Investors in People Award since 2004 and has achieved the Wigan Quality Standard for its Foundation Stage provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. Its success is rooted in the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, who has managed the changing nature of the school in

a dynamic, but thoughtful and structured way. He has never lost sight of the personal and academic needs of the pupils and as parents indicate, expects their children to work hard and do their best. A very committed and well informed governing body gives

the school good support. It has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has played a significant role in planning and executing recent developments to meet the needs of young children in its community.

Pupils are keen to talk to visitors. They say that they are very well looked after within this

happy and friendly school and always know who to turn to when they need help. Very well established links with outside agencies make a significant contribution to the outstanding care of pupils and the excellent support for vulnerable pupils. A well planned

programme of personal development results in good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils quickly develop an awareness of the needs of others, know how to

behave safely and how to develop healthy lifestyles. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, with older pupils taking a very conscientious attitude towards their work. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities through such roles as prefects and buddies and have been able to contribute to school improvement, particularly through the work

of the school council. They show good community awareness as illustrated by the work of the school's eco-group and their donations to a wide range of charities. Good links with partner high schools mean that pupils are well prepared for their next phase of education.

Provision in the Reception class is good with small, well focused teaching groups. The staff provide a vibrant setting in which children learn well because they are taught well.

When children start in the Reception classes, their skills are below the levels expected,

particularly with regard to communication. They make good progress, so that by the end

of Reception, they reach standards which are broadly average, although language and communication skills still lag behind. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the school, so that by the end of Year 6, standards are above average, particularly in mathematics and science. In English, standards are broadly average and progress is satisfactory. The school is committed to raising achievement in English by raising the profile of reading and writing throughout the school. Arrangements for monitoring pupils'

progress are generally good and teachers make good use of the information to set challenging targets.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The school provides a colourful and stimulating environment, particularly through its good use of display. The very good use

made of Individual Education Plans and good deployment of teaching assistants means that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are involved in their own learning and make good progress. Pupils say that their teachers make their lessons enjoyable and interesting. As a result, pupils make good progress in their lessons. Marking is good.

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of pupils. A well-planned programme of enrichment activities supports pupils' development and learning.

Self-evaluation is strong, purposeful and used well to inform school improvement. The

school has moved to involve all staff in the process and this had led to improved staff confidence and understanding of how to raise standards. The inspectors judged some aspects of the work better than the school. This is because the school is determined to

improve and recognises that there is more to do in some areas. The exceptional way in

which the school responded to and welcomed pupils from a closing school and set up the children's extended services, whilst continuing to work to raise standards, demonstrates a significant strength in leadership and a good capacity to improve. The school has made good improvement since its previous inspection and successfully addressed concerns raised about the teaching of science and making better use of assessment to inform planning. The school provides good value for money because

accommodation, staffing and other resources are well used to enable pupils to achieve well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement in English throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The majority of children enter the Reception class with below average standards. Many of them, particularly boys, have weak language and communication skills. High levels of support and good teaching mean that children make good progress so that by the end of Reception, standards are broadly average. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the school. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics, although pupils' achievement in reading and writing are weaker than in mathematics. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has shown a steady improvement since 2001 and is now overall significantly above the national average in mathematics and science, with more pupils than previously attaining the higher levels. Girls' attainment in 2006 was slightly better than boys, with less able boys performing slightly below the national average in English. Achievement in English is satisfactory. The literacy coordinator has recognised the need to improve standards in reading and writing throughout the school and is working hard to ensure that boys achieve as well as girls. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported and achieve as well as their peers. Recent improvements in the school's academic monitoring systems mean that teachers are now well aware of the achievement of each pupil and able to set more precise learning targets which help pupils make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. There is a friendly, happy atmosphere around the school and this along with the positive relationships they experience helps pupils to enjoy their time at school. Pupils say they feel safe in school and are exceptionally aware of what to do to keep safe. For example, they avoid playing near potential hazards. Pupils have good opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. For example, it was a proposal from the school council that led to the buddy system. This is a good example of how the pupils have improved the way the school works for the benefit of all. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with pupils learning about other cultures through the whole-school approach to studying special celebrations such as the Chinese New Year. However, the school is aware that it needs to build on this good practice to broaden pupil's multi-cultural awareness. Behaviour is generally good around school and is often better than this in lessons. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average and the school is

working hard to improve this. Pupils are very aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. They participate in after-school clubs and make healthy food choices at lunchtimes. They show good community awareness. For instance, the school's eco-group has been helping elderly residents with their allotments.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress because they receive consistently good teaching. Lessons are well planned and teaching assistants give well informed support. Classroom relationships are good. Pupils are keen to contribute to lessons and maintain their concentration well when working independently. In particular, Year 6 pupils demonstrate an impressive determination to complete work to the best of their ability. This good practice is supported by effective marking of pupils' work, which identifies clearly what the pupils have learnt and what they need to do next to improve. Pupils know their targets and are able to evaluate their own learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well catered for in class and make good progress with their work as a result of the help they receive. Teaching of English is, on the whole, less effective. There is at times a lack of pace and challenge for the pupils in lessons and a lower expectation of the quality of handwriting and presentation of work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good quality curriculum caters well for the academic and personal development of the pupils. The Individual Education Plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities reflect the school's inclusive approach to education. They are clearly focused on individual needs and are very effective. The curriculum meets the needs of the pupils and caters well for their emotional needs. The pupils have many opportunities to talk to adults and their peers about their concerns and aspirations. Enrichment of the curriculum through visitors to the school, art and design activities and physical education is used well by the school to engage pupils and encourage them to work hard. The outdoor area for the children in the Reception classes has yet to be developed, but the school has appropriate interim arrangements in place. The literacy coordinator recognises the need to sharpen provision in English in all years. In particular, she realises that some groups of boys are not achieving as well as their peers and is successfully addressing this by introducing positive role models, as well as by improving provision in reading and writing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support is seen in the obvious commitment of all staff to promoting pupils' emotional well-being and academic

progress. Pupils know that if they are troubled or unhappy there is always someone to turn to. They report that their concerns are dealt with promptly. The learning mentor and the school nurse play an important part in working with pupils and families who need extra support and help. Links with other agencies are strong, particularly with regard to providing support for vulnerable pupils. The school is particularly welcoming to those entering the school from different cultures and backgrounds and provides for them well. The school's direct involvement in the development of extended children's services reflects its commitment to supporting the wider community. The facilities help the pupils' early development, as well as offering breakfast provision and after-school and holiday care. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are in place. Guidance given to pupils on academic progress is very good. All the pupils are clear about their learning, have targets to work towards and know what to do next to improve. The school is committed to fostering good relationships with parents and involving them further in life and work of the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good with outstanding features. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. He has created a strong sense of common purpose amongst the staff, who feel well supported and included. All leaders and managers have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. They play a major part in planning school improvement and work collaboratively in reviewing existing practice and developing the work of the school. One example of this is the way in which careful monitoring of teaching means that school leaders are aware of each teacher's strengths and weakness and are able to offer appropriate support, leading to improved practice. The school's leadership is fully aware of the barriers to learning experienced by many of its pupils in their early life and has devoted a great deal of energy and resources to overcoming these through its provision of extended childcare services. The school took in a large number of additional pupils in 2004. This presented a range of challenges to which the leadership team responded positively. For example, a thorough review of policies and practice led to a restructuring of the management team and significant changes to the school day. Although the work of some of the new leadership teams is in the early stages of development, the school is now well placed to improve its already good provision and to raise standards even further. The governing body knows the school well. It works closely with the headteacher and is well informed, so that it is able to monitor the work of the school and contribute to school improvement. However, a lack of formal links with middle managers means that the governors are not sufficiently well equipped to challenge the school in all areas of its work.

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?	2
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	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	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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?	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?	2
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	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

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we came to inspect your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you and hearing all the things you like about your school. You are clearly very proud of it!

We think your school is a good place in which to learn. It gives you a good standard of education that is getting better all the time. Here are some of the things we think are particularly good about it.

- The outstanding care everyone takes of you and how hard all the staff work to do their best for you.
- Your good behaviour and cheerfulness, and how well you all get on together.
- The very good way your school helps those of you who sometimes have difficulties.
- How keen you are to learn and the good progress that you make in your lessons.
- The way your headteacher works so hard and successfully with lots of people and groups to help you in your education.

There are two important things that we think could be better and so we have asked your headteacher and all those who work in your school to:

- make sure that you read more
- help you to improve your writing.

Of course, you also have an important part to play in helping your school to carry on improving. You can do this by continuing to be as positive about learning as you are now and by continuing to try your best, especially in English, mathematics and science. Thanks again for making us feel so welcome.