

St Philip's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105944
Local Authority	Salford
Inspection number	308989
Inspection dates	11–12 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

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	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Andy Salmon
Headteacher	Mrs Hazel Brady
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2003
School address	Barrow Street Salford Lancashire M3 5LF
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school serves a disadvantaged inner-city area that is part of the Salford and Irwell Education Action Zone. Most pupils are White British but a small number, some of whom stay for only a short period, speak English as an additional language. Almost three times the average proportion of pupils is eligible to receive a free school meal. Twice the national average has learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the proportion that has a statement of special educational need is very large. This is because the school has two resource units where specialist staff support up to 16 pupils between ages 4 and 11 who have speech and language or communication disorders. Over the past three years the school has had two temporary and two permanent headteachers. The current headteacher took up post in April 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Philip's provides a satisfactory education for its pupils within a very friendly and supportive environment that enables them to grow in confidence. 'Our sons love going to St Philip's', is typical of the unanimously supportive comments made by parents. Others praise staff's 'outstanding one-to-one communication' with pupils and parents, and the way the school 'really helps children to come out of their shell.'

During its years of unsettled leadership, the school moved forward in various ways such as the provision of a library and an information and communication technology (ICT) suite, and the introduction of procedures to assess pupils' progress. However, pupils' standards of work slipped backwards to significantly below average at both key stages. Standards are still somewhat below average, particularly in English, with overall levels affected by the large number of pupils with learning difficulties and communication disorders. Pupils are now making satisfactory progress in Key Stages 1 and 2, although older higher attaining pupils, in particular, do not yet reach the levels of which they are capable. Children in the lively, well focused Foundation Stage make good progress from their low starting points. Pupils in the language resource units achieve well in response to the careful assessment of their individual needs and to the skilful teaching they enjoy.

The quality of teaching and learning in the main school is satisfactory. Teaching and support staff prepare interesting lessons, give clear directions and manage pupils' behaviour well so that they enjoy learning and sustain their concentration. However, teachers do not make enough use of the information available from assessing pupils' progress to ensure that they present them with sufficient challenge to accelerate progress. This is particularly the case for older higher attaining pupils. Teachers' expectations of the quantity and presentation of written work are not high enough. Their use of marking as a tool for helping pupils to understand how to improve their work is limited.

Pupils' good personal development means that they behave well and greatly appreciate the fun that they have with their friends both in lessons and at other times. A strong sense of community permeates every corner of the building, with older pupils readily helping younger ones. All pupils are fully integrated into the family atmosphere. They play energetically and cooperatively, have a good awareness of potential danger and understand about healthy living.

Adaptations made to the curriculum over the past two years mean that it caters well for the needs of pupils. They thoroughly enjoy the links now made between subjects which help them to make sense of their learning, and the many visits and visitors that bring that learning to life. Their willingness to learn is also strongly assisted by the very good quality care that all staff provide for pupils, many of whom have difficult home circumstances.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Many changes of personnel have led to changes of direction over recent years, but there is now a clear sense of purpose and a unified determination to move forward. Staff and governors have an increased understanding of the importance of raising the levels of pupils' academic, as well as personal, achievement. They are beginning to put in place the procedures to bring this about. The school knows itself well and has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

A well organised, welcoming environment and staff's consistent encouragement in the Foundation Stage ensure that children make good progress here. The overwhelming majority join the Nursery with weak skills in all areas of learning. They respond well to the good quality teaching and interesting activities that greet them. First-hand experiences, such as sampling fruit and making a smoothie or discussing a street-cleaning machine, successfully engage children's interest and encourage them to develop their speaking and listening skills. Detailed observation and assessment ensure that teachers skilfully plan the next steps in children's learning. By the time they join Year 1, their skills are still below those expected for their age in all areas. However, particularly good progress in their personal development and in their ability to match letters to sounds provides strong building blocks for their future learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards throughout the school, particularly in English and for higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that teachers make effective use of assessment information when planning and teaching lessons, and marking pupils' work.
- Raise teachers' expectations of the amount of written work pupils produce across the curriculum and the quality of its presentation.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In 2006, the most recent year for which there is validated information, the school's results were well below average at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. The small numbers in each year group and the high proportion of pupils with communication disorders have a significant impact on the results, but the school itself acknowledges that the pupils did not achieve well enough. It met its targets in mathematics but fell far short in English. External support and more sharply focused teaching has led to improvements, particularly in Key Stage 1, although the 2007 results for Years 2 and 6 are still below average, with very few pupils gaining the higher levels expected for their age. Pupils at both key stages are now making satisfactory progress in lessons and over time. Many, however, lack the stamina to record their learning in writing clearly, accurately and at a length in line with expectations for their age. Individually tailored work and a stimulating, supportive environment ensure that pupils in the resource units with communication difficulties make good progress that enables around 75% to return to mainstream schooling.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils describe their school as 'excellent', 'fabulous' and 'brilliant'. They much appreciate the way that the school council, new since the previous inspection, enables them to put forward their opinions and improve things for everyone. It helped to establish the playground buddies which, pupils say, means there is less squabbling over toys now. Certainly, behaviour in the

playground is exuberant but amicable. In lessons and around school it is quiet and respectful in response to good quality relationships and staff's consistent expectations and guidance. Pupils are developing satisfactory skills to support their future well-being but even the older ones need adult encouragement to produce extended work. The school's effective action means that punctuality is improving, as are attendance levels, although these are still somewhat below the national average.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are thoughtful about the effect of their actions on others and generous in their support of those less fortunate than themselves. Their singing is lively and tuneful. Pupils treat those with communication disorders exactly as they do others, fully including them in activities. They work well together and show interest in other cultures both through lessons, such as French, and in the welcome they provide to newcomers from other countries.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and support staff work well together so that classrooms are business-like and well focused on learning. Careful preparation and clear explanations, combined with a variety of activities, ensure that lessons move at a good pace and pupils sustain their interest. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils in a numeracy lesson greatly enjoyed wearing their hundreds, tens and units crowns that helped to consolidate their understanding of three-digit numbers. Good quality relationships and skilful management of pupils create a happy working atmosphere. What distinguishes the good quality teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage and language resource units from the more general satisfactory quality elsewhere, is the use that teachers make of assessment information to guide their planning, teaching and marking of pupils' work. Expectations in these areas are higher than elsewhere in the school. The school is just beginning the second year of consistently and comprehensively monitoring individuals' progress through the year. Older pupils are finding the marking system that identifies their strengths, weaknesses and necessary next steps very helpful, but this is new to the school and not used consistently in all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Starting the day with a variety of activities from across the creative curriculum has proved beneficial in increasing pupils' punctuality and enthusiasm for learning. The overall curriculum is well adapted to their needs. A strong focus on literacy and numeracy is beginning to raise standards in these subjects, with many opportunities for small groups and individual extra support for those who find learning more difficult. However, there is room to develop pupils' writing skills more extensively. ICT is used well to support learning in other subjects, for example to explore the work of artists or create bar charts of minibeasts. Pupils' personal, social and emotional development is at the heart of all the school's work. This good quality provision, combined with that for their physical education, led to the school achieving the national Healthy School award in 2005. Visits to places of interest, including two residential stays for older pupils, and a wide range of visitors provide enrichment and successfully broaden pupils' horizons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good quality pastoral care, guidance and support provided for all pupils are notable strengths of the school. Pupils know that if they approach any staff member for help, it will be forthcoming. They talk about how good staff are at helping them to calm down and develop strategies to sort out their problems. The learning mentor skilfully supports individuals and groups who have very diverse needs, so that they can cope with, for instance, anger or bereavement. The required procedures to ensure child protection and health and safety are in place. Close working with outside agencies such as speech and language therapists, and educational psychologists, combined with careful monitoring of progress ensures good quality support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff's very good knowledge of pupils and sensitive guidance for them creates the school's warm, predictable atmosphere in which they can successfully concentrate on learning. The provision of more specific academic guidance is at an early stage of development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has weathered the past years' storms caused by changes in leadership and other staff upheaval so that there is a well shared and understood clarity of vision and sense of vigour. The new headteacher, supported by senior staff, has conducted a thorough and accurate evaluation of the current position. Based on this and on an assessment of pupils' achievement, she has already implemented changes that are bearing fruit but have not yet had time to have an impact on standards. These include the introduction of a system used by all class teachers to assess and track pupils' progress, and adjustments to the way in which teaching assistants are deployed. The setting of targets for standards of work is under review so that it provides suitable challenge and more realistically reflects pupils' abilities.

The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and sound financial procedures ensure that it provides satisfactory value for money. Governance is satisfactory. Governors support the school well and many are regular visitors. As a group, they are aware of the need to hold it more critically to account for pupils' achievement than they have done in the past. Close working with the local authority has helped to kick-start improvements. The knowledgeable and realistic leadership now in place, together with staff's positive attitude and fundamental commitment to the pupils, means the school has the capacity to improve the school further.

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Annex A

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
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I thoroughly enjoyed my recent visit to your school. Thank you all for being so friendly towards me. Special thanks should go to the school councillors who gave up some of their lunchtime to help me understand what it is like to be a pupil at St Philip's. I would like to share with you what I found out.

Yours is a satisfactory school where all staff look after you really well. This means that you feel comfortable in school, get increasingly good at coping with any problems and can concentrate on your learning. You behave well both in school and outside in the playground. You understand how to keep safe and healthy. Your parents are all very happy about how the school helps you grow in confidence. You told me that you really enjoy lessons and I could see this when I came into your classrooms. Teachers prepare interesting things for you to do and they explain them clearly. Together with teaching assistants they give you good support so you don't waste time. Children in the Early Years and language resource units make good progress in their learning.

Your new headteacher and other senior teachers have a good idea about what needs to be done to make your school even better. I have asked them to concentrate especially on three things.

- To help all of you, but especially those older children who find learning easier than others, to raise your standards of work, particularly in English.
- To make better use of the information they have about your progress when planning and teaching lessons and also when marking your work.
- To have higher expectations of how much work you can do and how well you can present it.

From my two days in your school, I know that you enjoy learning so I am sure that you will try really hard to rise to the challenges your teachers set you. I also know that your attendance and punctuality have improved - well done and keep it up!