

St Catharine's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106464
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	309136
Inspection dates	4–5 February 2008
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 category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs V Brookes
Headteacher	Mrs G Armstrong
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2004
School address	Scholefield Lane Scholes Wigan Lancashire WN1 3LP
Telephone number	01942 733081
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average sized school serves a community which experiences high levels of socio-economic deprivation. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The number with a statement of special educational need is average. A small number of pupils are in public care. Children's skills on entry to the Reception class are well below those expected for their age. The school holds the Healthy Schools award and the Activemark.

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. It has a warm, caring and stable atmosphere, within which its pupils overcome many significant barriers to learning to develop into confident and caring individuals. The school goes to great lengths to raise pupils' aspirations and extend their knowledge and awareness of the wider world, recognising that many have limited experiences beyond their local community. The impact of the school's work is described well by parents' comments such as, 'This is a well run school with friendly, approachable teachers. We feel our son is making good progress and is always 'full of beans' when he gets home.'

The school has committed significant resources to secure the support of parents in order to raise pupils' standards. For example, the appointment of a key worker has resulted in a significant improvement in attendance so that it is now above the national average. The curriculum places much emphasis on raising pupils' confidence and increasing their enjoyment of school. It is well matched to the needs of learners and is enriched well by a good range of popular extra-curricular activities and visits. Pupils appreciate the good quality care, guidance and support they receive. They are friendly and polite. They feel safe and secure and know that the staff have their best interests at heart. They respond with good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Their good personal development is clearly illustrated by their keenness to take on responsibilities and contribute to the life of the school. They show good awareness of others' needs and are actively involved in community projects and charitable fundraising. The recent award of Healthy Schools status confirms the progress they are making in developing healthy lifestyles.

Children joining the Reception class quickly settle into school life but, despite making good progress in all areas of learning, they enter Year 1 with skills that are below average national expectations. They make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 1 but, particularly because of the slow development of their reading skills, standards at the end of Year 2 are still below average. As a result of consistently good quality teaching throughout Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress and attain standards in English, mathematics and science that are close to the national average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified quickly and well supported. Consequently, they make good progress. A particular strength of the school is its use of information and communication technology. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to engage and motivate pupils. The well-located computers are constantly in use by pupils working both independently and with the support of teaching assistants.

The school uses its system for tracking the progress of pupils to good effect, to identify and address individual learning needs and to improve provision. Teachers use assessment data well to guide their lesson planning but do not always inform pupils of the standard of their work and what they need to do to improve it. As a result they do not progress as well as they might.

The headteacher has successfully created a collaborative culture within the school where all staff have the confidence to contribute to school improvement. They know that their views will be valued and make comments such as, 'We will give it a try if we think a new approach will benefit our pupils.' Leaders and managers provide good direction and school improvement is well-focused on raising standards. The school has successfully addressed issues raised in its last inspection. It gives good value for money and has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start in the Reception class with numeracy and literacy skills that are well below the levels typically expected of children this age. An inclusive approach that meets their diverse needs in a safe, secure and stimulating environment, results in them making good progress through the Foundation Stage. Good teaching and a well planned, purposeful curriculum give children good opportunities to discover things for themselves. The strong focus on teaching basic skills ensures that pupils make good progress in the key areas of communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Effective use of the school's key worker means that the more able children are challenged appropriately and the less able children receive good additional support. Children are taught in a spacious, attractive and safe environment, although the outdoor area lacks shelter and, consequently, is not used to its full potential. Good management is indicated by the way in which the children are introduced to the school. They visit their new classroom on a number of occasions and the Reception teacher visits the children in all the Nursery settings. This means that children settle in very quickly and good quality learning begins immediately.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading at Key Stage 1.
- Improve pupils' awareness of the standards of their work and what they need to do to improve so that they can take more responsibility for their own learning and make better progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. After their good progress in Reception, pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 1. Consequently, standards in English and mathematics are still below average at the end of Year 2. The school recognises that attainment in reading is well below national expectations and this is a key area for improvement at Key Stage 1. During Key Stage 2 pupils build well on their previous learning and make good progress in English, mathematics and science, so that when they leave the school at the end of Year 6 standards are close to the national average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the good support they receive. The school uses assessment data well. In 2007 it met all its challenging targets for the Key Stage 2 tests except for the percentage of pupils attaining Level 4 in mathematics. While overall attainment was broadly average, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 in English and mathematics was below average. Girls out-performed boys in English and mathematics, but boys did better in science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that they understand the difference between right and wrong and relate well to each other. They make the most of opportunities to reflect individually and in groups on, for example, how the choices they make can affect others. In lessons, they listen attentively and show respect for each others' views. Behaviour is good. Children move around the school safely and play sensibly in the playground, despite the limited facilities for the older pupils. Year 6 pupils promote good citizenship by leading social games for the younger pupils on the playground and sitting with them both in

assembly and at lunch. Pupils say they enjoy school very much. The vast majority of parents are fully supportive of it, making comments such as, 'The school has helped our daughter grow into a confident, happy and well-behaved little girl who we are extremely proud of.' Pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and of the need to lead healthy lifestyles. They take good advantage of the fruit provided by the school and of opportunities to drink water during the day. They talk enthusiastically about the wide range of sporting and other extra-curricular opportunities provided by the school. Pupils are given opportunities to express their views, for example, through the school council, but are not consulted sufficiently on issues relating to school improvement. Activities such as an annual enterprise week for Year 6 pupils, contribute towards their satisfactory development of the skills and abilities needed to support their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers' high expectations of their pupils in terms of standards of work and behaviour mean that pupils have made good progress overall by the end of Key Stage 2. They know them well and their detailed lesson plans take account of pupils' learning targets and the progress they have previously made. Pupils show good attitudes to learning. They are keen and confident to contribute their ideas. In the more effective lessons teachers engage pupils through stimulating and lively introductions, often involving effective use of interactive whiteboards. They follow these with a good balance of teacher and pupil led activities which are well supervised and have clearly defined learning outcomes. Teachers' and pupils' confident use of computers greatly enriches pupils' learning and provides good opportunities for them to develop ideas at their own rate. The good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in particular the very good support provided by skilled teaching assistants, means that these pupils make good progress. Most lessons make provision for differences in pupils' abilities and learning styles. However, teachers do not plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, for example, by planning and assessing their own work and the work of fellow pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

In recognition of pupils' limited experiences beyond their immediate environment, the curriculum places particular emphasis on providing opportunities for them to experiment and explore, to raise their expectations and aspirations. Drama, art, music and dance are used well to develop exploration and free expression. A timetabled enrichment afternoon gives pupils a taste of something different, like learning Spanish and model making. A wide range of visits brings the curriculum to life. Involvement in a local cluster group provides opportunities to extend the more able and talented pupils through participating in activities such as archaeological digs and web-building workshops. A broad ranging programme of visiting speakers and groups provides further enrichment and effectively promotes pupils' health and safety. As a result, the curriculum provides stimulus and challenge, while at the same time ensuring a strong emphasis on developing basic skills. The coherent links made between subjects effectively support the development of literacy, numeracy and other skills and help pupils make greater sense of what they learn. For example, a project on Egypt incorporates aspects of history, geography, tourism and design and technology. However, subject leaders are in the early stages

of formally evaluating the impact of the curriculum on pupils' progress. There is a good programme to support pupils' personal development and their well-being is improved by providing at least two hours of physical education per week and activity breaks during the day.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils trust the staff and know who to turn to if they need help. Close links with a provider of before and after school childcare services and other agencies contribute well to the good level of care and support for pupils. Careful tracking of pupils' progress leads to early identification of those with additional needs, followed by effective arrangements to help them progress.

Pupils requiring individual action plans contribute their own ideas and their parents are closely involved in all stages of the process. This reflects the school's determination to increase the involvement of parents in supporting their children's academic progress. Regularly reviewed systems are in place to protect and safeguard children and to create a safe and secure learning environment for all pupils. Pupils are well informed of their targets and parents receive regular reports on their child's personal development and progress. However, on-going assessment of pupils' work is not used to best effect. In particular, while marking is generally supportive and encouraging, it does not focus sufficiently on evaluating the outcomes of the pupils' work. As a result pupils are not always sufficiently clear about their achievement or what they need to do to improve. This has a negative impact on the rate of their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's determination to do the best for all its pupils and to make them aware of what they can achieve is reflected in the good progress that they make. The headteacher has created a very strong sense of common purpose amongst the staff who feel well supported and fully involved in the life of the school. All leaders and managers have clear roles and responsibilities and fulfil these well. They play a part in planning school improvement, manage their own budgets and work collaboratively to review existing practice and to raise standards. The leadership team is aware of the school's strengths and of those aspects where they want to do better. The school improvement plan is detailed, based on good analysis of data and subject to regular review by staff and governors. A well planned approach to developing the confidence and competence of teachers and teaching assistants means that the good resources of the school are used well. Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching are in place, but they are not yet providing a sufficiently accurate picture of variations in the impact of teaching on learning. Governors play an active role in supporting the school and its pupils and in monitoring the work of the leadership team. However, inconsistencies in the way the improvement plan is evaluated mean that the governing body is not sufficiently well informed to challenge the school in all areas of its work.

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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?	2
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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 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	2
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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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	2
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**

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school and being so polite and friendly. We enjoyed talking to you and hearing all of the things you like about your school. We found that your school gives you a good education and helps you make good progress. Here are some of the things we judged to be good about your school:

- the care everyone takes of you
- how hard all the staff and governors work to do their best for you
- your good behaviour and how well you all get on together
- the way your headteacher works so hard with lots of people and groups to help you in your education.

There are two important things that could be better and so we have asked the school to:

- improve the quality of pupils' reading in Years 1 and 2
- make you more aware of the standard of your work and what you need to do to improve, so that you can take more responsibility for your own learning.

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 keep trying to improve all aspects of your work.

Thanks again for making us feel so welcome.