

St Luke's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106485
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	309142
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Eileen Mulgrew HMI

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	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Lever
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Groves
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
School address	Church Lane Lowton Warrington Cheshire WA3 2PW
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Luke's is an average-sized primary school. It serves an area of social and economic advantage, with a very low percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is well below the national average.

The school has received the following awards: Activemark Gold 2004, Investors in People 2007, Work Life Balance 2007, National Healthy Schools Accreditation 2007, Basic Skills Award 2007 and Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) Gold 2007.

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 some outstanding features. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide excellent leadership to the very enthusiastic and committed staff. Together with the supportive governing body, there is a focus on raising standards and the personal development of all pupils. Excellent care and support for all pupils and the opportunities for spiritual reflection underpins the pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. The school is popular with parents and is often oversubscribed. Parents are very supportive of the school's work and show an appreciation of the school's strong Christian values. The views of most parents are summed up in the comment: 'St Luke's is a friendly school that displays a caring and warm attitude towards its pupils. Each child is appreciated and treated as an individual with regard to their needs, educationally and emotionally.'

Standards are above average and achievement is good. Children enter school in Reception with skills typical of children of their age. By the time they leave in Year 6 standards in English, mathematics and science are consistently above average. This good progress is as a result of good or better teaching, a good curriculum and excellent care and support. The school recognises that the test results for Year 6 in 2007 were not as good as usual. Although most pupils attained the expected level for their age, some pupils did not reach the higher level of which they are capable. Evidence from inspection indicates that Year 6 pupils are on line to meet the challenging targets set by the school in 2008. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and vulnerable pupils, make good progress.

Pupils' enjoyment of school and learning is reflected in consistently high rates of attendance. Behaviour is good and sometimes excellent and pupils show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils have a very good understanding of the benefits of living a healthy lifestyle and enjoy choosing nutritious meals from the varied menu. Pupils relish the many opportunities for taking responsibility in the school. Elected school councillors confidently express ideas for the development of the school; for example, an improved range of play equipment is as a result of canvassing ideas from their classmates. Pupils' moral, social and cultural understanding is outstanding. Pupils know right from wrong and get on with each other very well. The Christian ethos permeates all aspects of the school and provides a foundation for the excellent understanding of the spiritual element in pupils' lives.

The school successfully delivers a curriculum which places high importance on the basic skills of literacy, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). Although the curriculum matches the needs and interest of most pupils, the school has recognised that more needs to be done to more fully develop pupils' skills, especially those of higher achieving pupils, across all subject areas and has plans to review this aspect of its work. Enrichment activities such as visits, visitors and the annual residential trip to Low Bank Ground greatly contribute to pupils' enjoyment of school. Likewise pupils appreciate the wide variety of after-school clubs available to all.

Teaching is good overall with some that is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and adapt nationally recommended guidelines well to meet the needs of most pupils in the class. However, this does not happen in all lessons and opportunities are missed to further extend the learning of the more able pupils. Pupils' work is marked regularly and comments celebrate the efforts and achievements of the pupils. However, not all marking explains to pupils how they can improve on their work. Good relationships between staff and pupils result

in pupils feeling safe and secure and willing to take risks in their learning. For example, during a mathematics lesson in Year 2, pupils were happy to have a go at answering problems set by the teacher. Interactive whiteboards and ICT equipment is used effectively to engage pupils in their learning. Skilled teaching assistants work successfully to support individuals or groups so that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good or even better progress.

Leadership and management, including governance, are good. Self-evaluation is used effectively and results in an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors have worked vigorously to create a rich learning environment in which all pupils can develop personally and academically. The school has established excellent partnerships with external agencies to promote the learning and well-being of all pupils; for example, the life education centre visits the school to talk about the dangers of drugs, alcohol and smoking. Governors understand their role and fulfil statutory requirements. The school has improved very well since the last inspection and has good capacity for future improvement. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of provision in the Reception class is good. Children join the Reception class with skills comparable to most pupils of that age group. Much emphasis is placed on developing pupils' personal, social and emotional skills so that, by the time they enter Key Stage 1, all pupils have achieved standards expected for their age in all areas of the early learning goals. Teaching is firmly based on a good understanding of how young children learn best and there is significant emphasis on the early development of speaking and listening skills. Pupils feel safe and well cared for and as a result all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, grow in self-confidence, are willing to take risks and make good progress. Staff work efficiently as a team to record thorough and accurate observations so that planned, teacher-led activities are well matched to the full range of pupils' needs and interests. There is opportunity for pupils to follow their own curiosity and create activities and games independently. Although the outdoor classroom has been improved since the last inspection, there is still scope for it to be used more creatively.

What the school should do to improve further

- Review curriculum provision to enhance the enjoyment of learning and further develop pupils' skills, especially for the more able pupils.
- Ensure marking of pupils' work indicates what pupils need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Pupils join Year 1 working securely within the early learning goals for their age. Good teaching and attention to personal development result in pupils making good progress over this key stage, so by the end of Year 2, most pupils attain standards above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Good teaching continues in Key Stage 2 and standards are above average in English, mathematics and science by the time pupils leave in Year 6. The number of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 in these subjects is more in line with the national average. Although the school consistently attains above average standards in both key stages, it recognises that national test and

assessment results for 2007 were not as good as in other years. This was because some pupils in Year 6 did not do as well as expected. The school has responded by refining still further its systems for tracking pupils' progress.

Standards in ICT have improved since the last inspection and pupils confidently use the equipment in all areas of the curriculum. The high quality displays of pupils' art work reflect the very good standards in this subject.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent. Significant elements of spirituality are to be seen and felt in the school, especially through art and music. A prime example was observed in a whole school assembly where sensitively chosen music was linked, via a beautifully observed moment of reflection, to the recent festival of remembrance. Many opportunities are taken to visit the local church, and members of the community join the school to celebrate church festivals. Pupils contribute well to their local community and have been rewarded for their efforts by local businesses. Pupils have a developing understanding of the wider community and talk with great enthusiasm about a recent Indian week and celebrations of the Chinese New Year.

Typical remarks from pupils included, 'I love this school' and 'It's great here'. Good, trusting relationships with adults result in pupils feeling safe and highly valued. They are confident that an adult will be there to care and support them if they have any worries. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. This is shown in their enthusiasm for two hours of physical education they receive each week, plus high attendance at the many and varied extra-curricular activities. The involvement in sporting activities leads to a healthy competitiveness for the future. The introduction of a healthy food 'advanced' selection system in the dining hall has been welcomed by parents and pupils as a method for planning a healthy, well-balanced diet. Pupils say that they love looking through the menus with their parents and making choices.

Pupils' overall attendance is outstanding, as is their punctuality. Behaviour in most lessons and around the school is good and on occasions excellent. Attitudes are good and pupils develop good qualities leading to their growing into confident, articulate and tolerant young people. Together with good progress in the basic skills of reading, writing, numeracy and ICT, pupils are ready for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers' good subject knowledge, detailed planning, high expectations of pupils and very effective use of ICT lead to good learning, so that pupils make good progress and reach above average standards. Teachers use detailed assessment, tracking and target-setting systems to monitor pupils' academic progress. However, some aspects of this system have only recently been introduced, consequently, they need time to embed. Some lessons are outstanding. Typical features of the stronger lessons include very brisk pace, high elements of challenge, precise teaching and work matched at just the right level for each pupil. Consequently, pupils make rapid progress and attain high standards in their work. For example, in an upper school

mathematics lesson linked to the accuracy of estimation, pupils used practical, fun activities to solve problems. In a few lessons, the pace is slower and work is not always completely matched to pupils' ability levels leading to a slower rate of progress. Marking celebrates the successes pupils achieve but it is inconsistent in explaining to each pupil how work can be improved to take their learning further.

Highly qualified teaching assistants are used very effectively to support individuals and groups resulting in all pupils, including those with difficulties and/or disabilities, accessing the curriculum and making good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good quality curriculum places importance on the development of the basic skills of English, mathematics and ICT. It is planned effectively to meet the needs of most pupils, although those reaching the higher levels of learning do not always have chances to apply their knowledge and skills. The attention to professional development for staff has led to ideas being introduced into the school to improve learning experiences. For example, after a visit of a member of staff to Australia, the school planned activities based on how pupils learn best. This visit assisted the school's evaluation of the curriculum and a plan to further strengthen the development of pupils' skills has been identified as an area for development this year.

The curriculum is enhanced by the provision of a wide range of visits, visitors and a good variety of after-school clubs; for example, scrabble, orienteering, choir and multi-skills. Pupils look forward to the annual residential trip to Low Bank Ground and talk excitedly about what activities they will experience.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive excellent care and support. The headteacher and staff know all pupils and their families well. Positive relationships between parents, pupils and adults help to create a happy, friendly environment. Procedures to safeguard pupils follow latest government guidelines. The headteacher and governors have undertaken training in safer recruitment and child protection procedures are in place. Pupils feel secure and are well supervised with risk assessments conducted whenever needed. Very strong provision of personal, social and health education (PSHE) contributes to pupils' growing understanding of their own personal development and health and safety.

Arrangements for settling new pupils into school, and for transfer to secondary school, are very good. The school works effectively in partnership with parents and other agencies to support pupils who may need extra support.

Pupils are becoming increasingly aware of their individual targets for improvement in reading, writing and mathematics. Targets are communicated to parents through the newly introduced year planners. This gives parents an opportunity to share activities with their children to support their achievement. This system of individual target-setting is a recent idea and it is too early to judge the impact on pupils' progress and standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher is excellent. Together they provide a very good steer for the enthusiastic team of staff and drive the school forward. Contributions from all staff are valued and strong systems of communication support a culture focused on pupils' well-being and raising their academic attainment. Thorough procedures for checking on the quality of lessons and the effectiveness of other aspects of the school have led to an acknowledgement of the strengths of the school and an ability to prioritise actions for improvement. Most subject leaders are productive in their monitoring role but some, including those new to their role, are as yet less effective. The commitment to ensure staff are kept up-to-date with current educational ideas results in highly motivated practitioners who want the best for their pupils.

Governance is good and the chair of governors has a very good grasp of the role of the governing body. Governors are kept well informed through regular, evaluative reports and presentations from staff, and good links are developing between individual governors and subject managers. The good partnership between governors and the parent association is one way for the governing body to successfully monitor the day-to-day running of the school. Together with the visits governors make to the school, especially for celebrations and events, they are well placed to support and challenge the school.

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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?	1
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	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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?	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	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

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

We would like to thank you for welcoming us and helping us when we visited your school to see how well you were learning. We found out a lot from watching your lessons, looking at your work, talking to the staff and a governor. We particularly enjoyed talking to all of you because you all had views about what it is like to be a pupil at St Luke's. You told us you had a good school and we agree with you. You are happy to attend St Luke's and your parents are happy for you to attend too.

These are some of the things that particularly impressed us about your school. Your teachers do a super job teaching you so you reach above average standards in your work. We were struck by your school's friendly atmosphere and the way you all get on well together. Your behaviour is good and sometimes excellent. You are tolerant, respectful and value other people. Your spiritual understanding is excellent. You have a first-rate understanding of healthy lifestyles and relish opportunities for taking responsibility.

Staff take good care of you and want you to be the best you can be when you move on to your next school. They want you to enjoy your education even more by having more exciting activities which extend your skills. For this to happen I have asked your headteacher and teachers to have a look at the curriculum to see if it can be made more interesting. You can help by telling your teachers the sort of projects you would like to study. Your teachers want you to make your work even better, so I have asked them to include in their marking a comment which will tell you what you need to do next. For you, the important thing is to keep working and playing hard, safe and fair. We know you will all do that.