

St Oswald's Catholic Primary School, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106488
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	309143
Inspection date	24 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Marie Cordey

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	316
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr K Stout
Headteacher	Mrs P Carter
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2005
School address	Council Avenue Ashton-in-Makerfield Wigan Lancashire WN4 9AZ
Telephone number	01942 724820
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievement and standards, the quality of teaching and learning, pupils' personal development and well-being, and how well the school's leadership promotes care and high standards. Evidence was gathered from national published assessment data; the school's self-evaluation; assessment records, policies and minutes of meetings; observation of lessons; pupils' work; discussions with pupils, staff, the chair of governors and Foundation governor; and the questionnaires returned by parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments in its self-evaluation form were not justified. These have been included, where appropriate, in the report.

Description of the school

This large school is set in an area close to the town of Ashton-in-Makerfield. A small proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. A below average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark for its sports provision and Eco Silver status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school and provides the highest quality of care and education. The overwhelming majority of parents agree. They say, for example: 'I am proud to have my children at St. Oswald's. Pupils' learning is testament to the dedication of all staff on a daily basis,' and 'Leadership is excellent. We could not be happier.' The leadership team's vision and excellent care for pupils are the foundation for pupils' outstanding personal and academic development.

From entering the Reception class with broadly average skills, pupils make excellent progress to achieve very high standards by the end of Year 6. Their standards and achievement reflect a period of steady improvement over recent years. Pupils' progress is rigorously tracked and evaluated, and decisive and effective action is taken if any pupils are not achieving as they should. Pupils are exceptionally knowledgeable and well informed in English, mathematics and science. An example of pupils' outstanding curriculum is the way in which teachers incorporate learning in a range of areas in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) lessons. Consequently, pupils are well informed, for example about current affairs, personal finance and abstract art. They are taught to be analytical and questioning and they relish solving problems.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they are very welcoming and courteous. They make an outstanding contribution to their community by taking care of the local environment and through generous fundraising locally, nationally and internationally. In turn, representatives from the community are happy to work with the school. Ashton Bowling Club, for instance, provides free lessons to Year 6 pupils who then take part successfully in competitions with a local school. Pupils are proud to represent their peers on the school council, as eco committee members and in responsible roles helping others such as 'playground rangers' and play organisers. Their excellent attitudes are based on adults' respect for them and the school's emphasis on care and tolerance towards all. Pupils live the school's overarching statement, 'We pledge to respect the equal human rights of all our pupils and to educate them to respect difference.' An explicit commitment to preparing pupils for life in multicultural Britain has prompted in pupils a great pride in being British and being part of a country that is diverse and rich. Typically, pupils commented, 'We learn so much about other people's lives and backgrounds and it helps us understand ourselves much better.' Pupils enjoy school immensely and their attendance is good. They eat healthy school lunches in the dining room. Thanks to the school's excellent links with parents in promoting a healthy diet, pupils eat nutritious packed lunches.

Outstanding teaching and learning are based on exceptionally high expectations for every pupil. These are realistic and based on excellent knowledge of each pupil's individual needs. Lessons are invigorating and pupils enthuse about their learning. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils added to their understanding and application of mathematics by preparing budget statements, personal finance analyses and economic projections. They spoke articulately and persuasively about money management and its implications for society. Teachers, together with support staff, plan lessons very well so that they meet the needs of all pupils. Those pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported extremely well and make outstanding progress. Pupils are included in the assessment of their learning and this ensures that they are aware of how they are doing in their work and what is needed to prepare them for the next steps in their learning. Excellent provision for ICT has improved pupils' skills in all other subjects, particularly in writing. This provision has been especially successful in engaging and stimulating boys.

The school's outstanding headteacher and leaders promote excellence in care and education for all. This is shared by governors who are firmly committed to constant improvement. The school has accurately identified the need to promote more opportunities for children to be more involved in planning their learning; for example, in the Foundation Stage. Excellent leadership and management ensure that pupils are safeguarded and that their care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pupils know how to keep safe and they are very well prepared for the future. Challenging targets are used very well to raise standards. Links with outside services such as educational psychologists and local authority partners make an outstanding contribution to pupils' achievement and well-being. The excellent governing body rigorously questions the personal and academic development of pupils and all governors regularly attend school both to support pupils and to check the school's effectiveness. Based on a strong record of improvement since the previous inspection and the impact of its very effective self-evaluation, the school has outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage settle very quickly because of excellent provision for their personal development and welfare. Parents have many opportunities to come into the Reception classes before their children join the school so that they can help their children prepare for school life. Children make good progress from their broadly average starting points because of good teaching and leadership. By the time they leave Reception, many children have exceeded the early learning goals for their age. Some children start in Reception lacking the initiative to do things for themselves. Although they become better at this, their improvement is not as rapid as in other areas of their learning. This is because the opportunities for children to plan activities and to develop their interests are comparatively limited. Nonetheless, a wide range of activities is planned to excite children and to involve them in their learning. They become more confident and articulate because of an emphasis on speaking and listening. Staff incorporate the teaching of letter sounds and of number recognition into children's everyday activities. This has helped children to improve their writing and their knowledge of numbers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage to plan their own activities that match their interests and needs.

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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?	1
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	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 very much for the warm welcome you gave to me when I came to inspect your school. I would especially like to thank the pupils who met with me to give their views about school and the many other pupils who willingly took the time to talk to me. You are all very polite and pleasant.

I agree with you and your parents that St Oswald's is an excellent school. You learn very well and improve your standards in all subjects. You like to be involved in lessons, especially when you can match it to your life outside school. For example, I learned a lot about managing a budget and spending wisely from pupils in Year 6! You eat healthily and if you take packed lunches to school both you and your parents make sure that they are nutritious. One of the best things about your school is the way you look after each other and celebrate all the many different types of people who make up our world. This is because of the outstanding way the school looks after you and helps you to understand and respect others.

Children in the Reception classes settle down very quickly because of the excellent care they receive, and they enjoy coming to school. I would like some of them to be more involved in planning what they do, so that they can have a bit more say in their own learning.