

St Marie's Catholic Primary School Standish

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106493
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	309145
Inspection dates	16–17 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Barbara Flitcroft

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	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Rynn
Headteacher	Mrs E Somers
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2005
School address	Avondale Street Standish Wigan Lancashire WN6 0LF
Telephone number	01257 422975
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Marie's Catholic Primary is a larger than average school. The percentage of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. A very large majority of the pupils are White British; very few of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The school holds the National Healthy Schools Award, Investors in People, Eco School Green Flag, Activemark, Wigan Quality Standard Award for Foundation Stage, Financial Management Standard and Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Marie's is an outstanding school, providing excellent value for money. Pupils achieve exceptionally well, reaching standards that are consistently well above the national average by the time they leave. This is the result of excellent teaching and an exciting, high quality curriculum where the development of basic skills and how to think things through are given high priority. Excellent care, guidance and support, and a very positive school atmosphere, lead to outstanding personal development and well-being.

Parents, pupils, church representatives and governors are very proud of their school. Parents strongly support the excellent work of the school, making positive comments such as, 'Children become well rounded and happy young people.' Parents really appreciate the high quality teaching and care their children receive.

Pupils are well aware of how to live healthily and this is emphasised in their choices of snacks and items from the lunch menu. Their physical activities in after school clubs demonstrate very good understanding of how to stay safe and how their choices can affect their safety and the safety of others. Pupils make positive contributions to the community through strong and productive links with charities, local groups such as the Standish Forum and the church. They are very well prepared for future economic well-being through the many curriculum opportunities offered to them and the jobs in school that older pupils greatly enjoy taking responsibility for, through acting as secretaries, buddies and play-leaders.

Children enter the Reception class with skills in line with those expected of this age. They make a great start to their education because of a stimulating and supportive environment, which enables them to quickly become confident learners. Pupils continue to make rapid progress as they move through school because teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers are enthusiastic and have excellent relationships with their classes. Consequently, pupils are eager to learn and strive to do their best. By the time they leave, they are extremely well prepared for their secondary education and the world beyond. Very clear advice on how to improve ensures pupils and teachers have a shared understanding of what is needed to take the next steps in learning. This accelerates progress. New arrangements have been introduced through which teachers plan particularly rich and exciting learning opportunities, in order to encourage pupils' creative skills. These are increasing motivation and prompting pupils to undertake research in their own time. However, the initiative has not yet been monitored to fully check on its impact on learning.

Outstanding leadership and management are characterised by a relentless drive towards improvement, which takes into account the parents' and pupils' views. This has led to excellent provision. Leaders at all levels are involved and committed to providing the very best learning and development opportunities for their pupils.

The school's self-evaluation is thorough and accurate. Careful and targeted monitoring by staff and governors identifies the school's strengths and areas for development. School leaders have effectively addressed all the issues identified at the last inspection and strong teamwork has driven further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage leader provides effective and efficient leadership and is instrumental in improving the learning environments. Planning and assessment are detailed and ensure that children are provided with a variety of rich experiences. They make very good progress in relation to their individual starting points, with most reaching the expected standards in all areas of learning and a good proportion exceeding these, by the time they enter Year 1. The industrious setting has an increasing focus on basic skills and thinking skills. Activities, which are well matched to the children's stages of learning, allow children to show initiative, make decisions, explore ideas and interests and develop their concentration. Excellent use of information and communication technology (ICT) and digital photography, during the inspection, allowed children to see themselves as passengers on a bus in an addition activity. Children work cooperatively with their peers and have delightful relationships with the adults in school. The daily election of a 'special jobs person' encourages children to take responsibility.

What the school should do to improve further

- Evaluate the impact of the new curriculum arrangements to ensure they maximise pupils' learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve extremely well in all aspects of learning from their starting points in Reception. By the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. Standards at the end of Year 6 have remained consistently well above average for many years. More than half the pupils reached Level 5 in the national tests in 2007 in English and science and almost half the pupils reached this level in mathematics. The school's thorough and accurate assessment information indicates that pupils make exceptionally good progress throughout the school. A strong emphasis on basic skills provides a very strong foundation for further development. Extra support is targeted astutely to ensure all groups of learners, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve very well indeed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding because of the high expectations of all staff, stimulating teaching and excellent relationships. Pupils say they like their teachers, that other pupils are really friendly and there is no bullying: they really enjoy school and, consequently, attendance is excellent. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding. Pupils are very polite and courteous. They develop into very mature, reliable individuals as they move through the school and take on responsibilities enthusiastically and sensibly. They make an excellent contribution to the community and show care and concern for others through their collections for charity. Members of the school council represent the views of their classmates well and are very pleased that some of their ideas have been implemented, such as the impressive activity trail, from which pupils derive such great benefit. The school's achievement of the Healthy Schools Award and Activemark reflects the pupils' outstanding understanding of the need for healthy lifestyles. They are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils make excellent progress as a result of the outstanding quality of teaching. Lessons are planned thoroughly to meet all pupils' needs. Good routines ensure that classrooms are quiet, industrious places. Clear learning objectives, and lively and informative explanations, with excellent use of questions, ensure that pupils clearly understand what they have to do. Teachers use technology imaginatively and competently to present activities in a stimulating and interesting way that matches pupils' capabilities well. Pupils respond by showing very positive attitudes to learning. They are attentive, enthusiastic and extremely keen to answer questions. Lessons stimulate pupils and move at a rigorous pace. Teachers make excellent use of assessment to ensure that work is set at exactly the right level of challenge and this leads to rapid progress for all. Teachers effectively assess pupils' understanding and regularly monitor and assess pupils' work as they circulate in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The excellent curriculum presents an exceptionally rich diet of learning experiences to pupils. It pays close attention to the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, and other subjects are also covered very well. The linking of subjects on a common theme, with an emphasis on the development of the most important skills, has recently been introduced and is successfully starting to make learning even more relevant for pupils. The curriculum supports pupils' personal development extremely well. The excellent personal, social, health and citizenship education programme presents a wide range of opportunities for pupils to explore issues, such as conservation, and is developed very effectively. Residential visits provide opportunities for them to become increasingly independent and to take on personal challenges. Themed weeks such as Healthy Living and Arts weeks create much excitement in learning. Pupils appreciate the excellent opportunities to enrich their learning through educational visits and through visitors to school who have specific information or skills to share. The range of extra-curricular activities on offer for pupils is impressive and well supported by pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Teachers know their pupils very well and work closely with parents to ensure that the level of pastoral support provided is excellent. Pupils say that they feel safe and would happily go to an adult if they had any concerns. A high level of respect is evident across the school between staff and pupils. Child protection arrangements meet requirements. Staff and governors rigorously carry out health and safety checks and risk assessments. The school has well developed links with outside agencies and arrangements for supporting any vulnerable pupils and those with special learning needs are extremely well organised. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored. Marking is thorough and gives clear guidance as to how pupils can improve. Staff work very closely with individuals to help each one to achieve the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

All leaders make a very valuable contribution to the school's effectiveness. Outstanding and innovative leadership from the headteacher, ably supported by her deputy headteacher, senior managers, governors and highly committed staff team, indicates that there is excellent capacity for improvement. Leaders at all levels know the strengths of the school very well indeed. They know exactly what they need to do to sustain high standards and to drive the school even further forward. Highly successful staff teams, led by the middle managers, enable all staff to develop their skills in monitoring, evaluating and improving teaching and learning and developing the curriculum. The school has identified that the most recent changes to the curriculum have not yet been evaluated to ensure their impact on pupils' learning. Governance is excellent. Governors take their responsibilities very seriously, offering high quality support and challenge. They have an extremely good understanding of the school's performance: this is systematically reviewed and findings are used very well to guide planning for improvement and to set challenging targets.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
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	1
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**

Mr Markham and I would like to thank you for being so polite and helpful when we visited your school. It was wonderful to see what a happy time you have and it was a great pleasure to see you at work and play.

We were pleased to hear from you that you really enjoy your school because there are many exciting things to do and learn. Your mums, dads and carers also think that your school is a really good place to be and we agree with them.

The adults are excellent at teaching you and they know exactly what each of you needs to learn. This helps you to make superb progress. The adults are also very good at checking how well you develop new skills and helping you achieve the next steps in your learning.

We were delighted to know that you have daily opportunities to eat fruit and vegetables in school and get lots of exercise when you play, and to see how this helps you to make decisions about being healthy. Your behaviour was excellent and you treat others with great respect.

Your teachers plan really exciting ways of learning. We have asked them to keep a check on all the new ways of learning they have introduced, to make sure that you keep on doing as well as you possibly can. You can help as well by continuing to work hard in lessons.

Thank you for helping to make our short stay with you so interesting and good luck to all of you for the future.