

St Lewis Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111368
Local Authority	Warrington
Inspection number	310581
Inspection date	30 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Marguerite McCloy 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	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Derrek Davies
Headteacher	Mr Michael Boland
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2004
School address	Mustard Lane Croft Warrington Cheshire WA3 7BD
Telephone number	01925 762268
Fax number	01925 767784

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors for one day. The inspector investigated the following issues: the progress that pupils make; the quality of teaching; pupils' personal development and well-being; and the quality of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's own self-evaluation form (SEF); national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; policies and minutes; observations of the school at work; interviews with members of staff and pupils; and the parents' questionnaire. 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, as given in its SEF, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Lewis is a smaller than average sized primary school. It is situated in the village of Croft, between Warrington and Leigh. This is an area of mainly private housing and below average levels of social and economic disadvantage. The majority of pupils live in the surrounding area. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well below average, as is the number who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational need is just above average. Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage and virtually all speak English as their first language. The school has awards for Healthy School status, Investor in People, Eco School and Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Lewis is providing a good education for its pupils. Children enter the school with skills that are often above those expected of their age. They make good progress during their time at the school and results in national tests are well above the national average.

At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils reach above average standards overall and well above average in mathematics and writing. Pupils' attainment by the age of 11 is significantly above average. A higher than average proportion of pupils reach the upper Level 5 in English and mathematics. The school is aware of the potential to increase the number of pupils reaching the higher level in science and is taking action to improve this. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who have a statement of special education need, also make good progress. Higher-attaining pupils achieve well, although there is scope to provide further challenge for a minority of pupils to ensure they fully reach their potential.

High standards of attainment have been maintained over a number of years, with slight variations at both key stages according to particular cohorts of pupils. A contributing factor to pupils' good achievement is the support they receive from their parents, who show interest and involvement in their child's education. Pupils themselves are able to concentrate well in lessons and are generally keen to do their best.

Pupils' personal development is good because of the good levels of care, guidance and support the school provides. Attendance is well above average and most pupils enjoy school, have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. They have a good understanding of how to stay healthy. Pupils make healthy food choices and physical education is given a high priority on the timetable and as part of after-school activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their awareness of other cultures has been improved since the last inspection. It is promoted through planned opportunities within the curriculum, which is broad and balanced and meets pupils' needs well. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of enrichment activities and French is taught throughout the school.

A significant minority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire feel that behaviour in school is not as good as it should be. The inspector found that behaviour in lessons is good and any boisterousness seen around the school at break-times is not excessive. Pupils who spoke to the inspector agreed that lessons are not usually disrupted by the small minority of pupils who find it difficult to behave appropriately. Pupils are aware of the school's expectations and the systems in place to promote good behaviour and attitudes. Many spoke eagerly about the 'merit shop' and how they are keen to earn points and achieve recognition for their efforts. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that any incidences of bullying will be dealt with. They are happy with the level of care they receive and say they can always talk to someone if they have a problem. Pupils enjoy opportunities to take on responsibilities, for example, as school council members, classroom monitors, 'buddies' to younger children and fund-raising for charities. Pupils are prepared well for adult life through their good levels of basic literacy and numeracy and the equal emphasis placed on their personal development.

Teaching and learning are good overall although the quality of teaching is not consistently high. The school is aware that some lessons could be more interesting and challenging in order to further increase the pace of pupils' learning. Teachers are making good use of recent training in the development of cooperative learning structures to promote pupils' thinking skills and group work. Pupils are generally aware of how well they are doing, what the class targets are

and what they need to do to improve. The use of more specific or individual targets is at the early stages of development, although teachers are now tracking pupils' progress more efficiently.

There has been a re-structuring of the school's senior team in recent months and their work has yet to have a full impact on the quality of leadership and management, which is satisfactory overall. There is a shared philosophy and a clear vision for how the school is to fulfil its mission statement, but monitoring and improvement planning are not sufficiently sharp. Leaders are generally aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, some of the judgements made in the school's self-evaluation are based on assumptions which are not always borne out by firm evidence. Progress in some of the issues identified at the last inspection has been slow initially, but is now gaining momentum.

A small number of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire do not feel that their views are taken into account. The inspector found that the school's 'open door' policy and the headteacher's accessibility provides sufficient opportunity for parents to discuss any issues or concerns. The leadership team and governors are keen to further enhance communication with parents to ensure there is a clear understanding of what action is taken following consultation. For example, 'progress graphs' are being introduced in response to parents' requests for a more accurate view of their child's attainment and progress over time. Another example is the provision of specialist music teaching to enable the continuation of the school choir and other musical activities.

The emerging strengths in leadership and management, including support and challenge from governors, show that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Almost all children have attended nursery schools and a good proportion enter the Reception class with skills above what is typical for this age group. Children are well cared for, guided and supported and an effective induction programme enables them to settle quickly and develop independence.

Most children meet, and many exceed, the early learning goals expected for their age by the time they leave the Foundation Stage. They achieve particularly well in mathematical skills and personal and social development. Teaching and learning are good and staff work well together. The classroom environment is well planned with a range of structured activities to stimulate learning. Improvements have been made since the last inspection to enable children to have continuous access to an outdoor learning environment. The balance between teacher-led and independent activities gives children good opportunities to engage in role play and consolidate their basic skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen the rigour of self-evaluation and improvement planning, ensuring that there are clear and specific intended outcomes for pupils and that all leaders are involved in monitoring the impact of the school's actions.
- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching so that all pupils are consistently challenged to the best of their capabilities.

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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	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?	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	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?	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of St Lewis Catholic Primary School, Warrington, WA3 7BD

As you may know, I visited your school recently to see how you were getting on. I am sure many of you will read my report yourselves, but I am writing this letter to tell you about some of the judgements I made.

St Lewis is a good school and most of you reach above average standards in your work by the time you move on to secondary school. Many of you told me that you enjoy coming to school, and I can see that because attendance is very good and you work hard in most lessons. Even though some of you could be better at walking around the school rather than running, and talking rather than shouting, your behaviour is usually good. Everyone seems to like the merit system, which encourages you to behave well and try your best in everything, and it works!

You are well cared for in school and given guidance on how to do better in your work. You get good support from your parents because they are interested in your education and want you to do well. Some of you told me how you appreciate being trusted to take on responsibilities, such as doing jobs around the school or being on the school council.

Your headteacher, staff and governors are working together to make the school even better and they also listen to ideas that you and your parents may have. It is not possible to do all the things that you may want, but the school does its best to make changes that will bring about improvement. Teachers are improving their skills to make more lessons good or better and I think that is a good target to aim for. The way the school checks on the quality of its work could be sharper, and the leadership team agrees that this is another useful target for improvement.

You can help by always working hard and being considerate towards each other and to all the adults who help you in school.