

# St Werburgh's and St Columba's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111384
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	310586
<b>Inspection date</b>	14 January 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gill Jones HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	316
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Fr Russell Cooke
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs D Penny
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 May 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Lightfoot Street Chester Cheshire CH2 3AD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01244 981228

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	14 January 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	310586

**Fax number**

01244 350540

**Age group** 4-11

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**Inspection date** 14 January 2009

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**Inspection number** 310586

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## Introduction

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

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievement; their personal development and well-being; the quality of care, guidance and support; and the effectiveness of the leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from: observing lessons; scrutinising school documentation and questionnaires completed by parents; and through discussions with children, governors, staff and the headteacher.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were justified. Such assessments have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

## Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized primary school situated near the centre of Chester. Pupils who attend the school come from a wide range of backgrounds but with a higher proportion than average from relatively advantaged homes. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. There is a lower proportion of pupils than average with learning difficulties and/or disabilities although the percentage with a statement of special educational need is in line with the national average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below that found nationally, though an increasing proportion of the new arrivals are at the early stages of learning English. The school population increased in 2008 following the closure of a local infant school. A new headteacher took up her post in September 2008.

The school has a breakfast club and an after school club. A separate inspection report for this provision is available on the Ofsted website.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a caring school which is providing a satisfactory quality of education, overall. Some aspects of its work, such as the pupils' personal development and well-being and the curriculum, are good. Children start school at ages four and five with a wide range of abilities. However, a large proportion has skills, knowledge and understanding at levels that are above those typical for children of this age nationally. They make satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and science, reaching standards that are generally above average by age 11. A new headteacher started in September 2008 following the retirement of the previous headteacher in July 2007. The intervening period coincided with some unavoidable instability and disruption to staffing, resulting in the underachievement of some pupils. However, the temporary leadership steered a steady course during this time and minimised disruption.

The new headteacher has made an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has plans of good quality to improve the school. However, these have yet to be fully implemented. She has made a positive start by creating new spaces for small groups to be taught and refining the system for tracking individual pupils' progress. The senior leadership team has been strengthened recently by the return of the deputy headteacher in December 2008 from maternity leave. The head and deputy head have high expectations for pupils' achievement in all aspects of school life. They are working effectively together and are well supported by conscientious staff.

The pupils are articulate, polite and courteous to visitors. Overwhelmingly, parents say their children are happy at school and they appreciate the good level of care and support provided by staff. The pupils' behaviour, attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils have high expectations of themselves and positive attitudes towards learning. They say they make friends easily. A small minority of pupils report that there are some instances of unruly behaviour in the playground. They are confident to tell their teachers about this but not all pupils feel it is dealt with fairly. As a result, the headteacher is revising the school behaviour policy. Pupils who join the school from minority ethnic groups feel well supported and welcomed by their peers. Older pupils have a good knowledge of healthy lifestyles and appreciate the healthy snacks that are provided by the school. The pupils enjoy the exceptionally wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly the residential visits which they say help them to work together to solve problems. The school council is proud of its work, especially the new wetland garden.

Following the last inspection, the standards reached at the end of Key Stage 1 fell to below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in 2008 standards improved and are now broadly in line with the national average for 7 year olds, though fewer pupils reach the higher Level 3 in writing and mathematics than is found nationally. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards have fluctuated since the last inspection. In 2007, they were well above average. All the pupils reached the national standards expected for 11 year olds in English, mathematics and science and two-thirds reached the higher Level 5, in English. However, the school's own data shows that the standards reached by 11 year olds in 2008 are lower than in the previous year and closer to the standards achieved since the last inspection. The school did not meet its targets and more able pupils did less well than expected. Overall, standards have remained above the national average at the end of Key Stage 2. This represents only satisfactory achievement for the majority of pupils, taking into account their relatively high starting points, and standards should be higher, especially for the more able. The standard of work in pupils'

exercise books is satisfactory. The new leadership team has identified a significant proportion of pupils who are not achieving as well as they could. As a result, challenging targets are now set for pupils and additional support is provided. However, it is too soon for these actions to impact on standards achieved. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language achieve well.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, overall. No outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Typically, teaching is lively and teachers engage the pupils' interest well. For example, in a good lesson, the teacher presented a dramatic retelling of a local Chester myth about King Harold to enhance the pupils' understanding. Consequently, they were highly motivated to write their own local myths. Where teaching is no better than satisfactory, it is mainly because the learning needs of pupils are not taken sufficiently into account. This is particularly pertinent in respect of the more able pupils who are not given sufficiently challenging activities and therefore do not make the progress of which they are capable. Teaching assistants are delegated well and provide good quality support to the pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, enabling these pupils to make good progress.

The curriculum is good. It meets statutory requirements and provides a good range of creative and cultural experiences for the pupils, making good use of excellent local resources. There is an appropriate emphasis on the basic skills and links are starting to be made between subjects, for example, by using English skills in science. French is taught throughout the school. Effective use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) for research. An excellent range of enrichment activities is provided, including two residential visits.

The school meets all current requirements for safeguarding the health and safety of its pupils. It provides good pastoral care. It works well in partnership with other local schools and pupils are well prepared for secondary school. The school is making satisfactory progress towards promoting community cohesion through its work in the parish community. Good relationships exist with external agencies. They work well with the school to support the needs of the most vulnerable pupils and their families. Children who join the school at times other than Reception report that they enjoy school. Parents say they feel welcome. However, many say they would appreciate more regular information on the standards reached by their children, so that they can help them to make better progress. The guidance given to pupils in lessons is satisfactory. The school is introducing learning targets, but practice is not yet consistent across all classes. Marking is generally encouraging, but most does not show pupils how to improve their work or what they need to learn next.

Governors are committed to the school and know the local community well. They recognise the need for improvement and that they should monitor the school's improvement plan closely and regularly in order to check the progress being made against improved outcomes for pupils. Appropriate action has been taken to secure improvement. This, together with the strength and impact to date of the new senior leadership team, demonstrates that the school has good capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS – Reception) from 22 different pre-school settings. As a result, they arrive with very different experiences and levels of confidence. The arrangements to provide staff with a secure knowledge of children's ability on starting school

are still at the early stages of development. However, in 2008, a large proportion of children started with skills, knowledge and understanding that were generally above those typical of four and five year olds nationally. After only four months in school, most children present as happy, confident and articulate, reflecting the good personal development and well-being achieved overall in the EYFS. For example, one child was able to explain to the inspector that 'an architect uses a plan to think about what he is going to build'. They listen well to the teacher and work and play together sensibly. By the time they leave Reception, the majority of children have achieved the Early Learning Goals and are ready to start the Year 1 curriculum. This represents satisfactory achievement and progress. Parents say their children enjoy school and they feel welcome to talk to the staff, though some feel they do not always have enough information about their child's progress.

The staff work together well to provide a safe, secure and caring environment for the children. The available space, which includes an outdoor and indoor area, is used confidently by children and they have easy access to all the areas of learning. Teaching is satisfactory. Children are not always provided with sufficient support to achieve their learning goals. For example, a group of children were set the task of writing the ingredients needed to make porridge, but did not have any letter cards, or sufficient adult support to help them to write the words, so their success was limited. Assessment is satisfactory. Although teachers know the ability of the children well, the tasks set do not always take enough account of this. The EYFS is affected by unavoidable disruption to staffing. The temporary EYFS leader is providing a satisfactory level of leadership and management.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards and achievement in all subjects at Key Stages 1 and 2, particularly for the more able pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to be at least good throughout the school.
- Ensure that the work set for pupils takes account of what they already know in order to provide sufficient challenge for them to make at least good progress in their learning.
- Ensure that the guidance given to pupils in lessons and through marking shows them exactly how to improve their work.
- Ensure that the governing body regularly checks the school's success in achieving the priorities identified in its improvement plan in relation to improved outcomes for pupils.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will have a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## 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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which 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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
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?	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

You may remember that recently I visited your school with Mr Crowther to see how well you are learning. Thank you for talking to us and for sharing your views about your school. This letter is to tell you what we found.

We judged your school to be satisfactory. This means that it needs to do some things better. Your school was without a headteacher for a while and it was a difficult time for some of you who had several teachers in one school year. But now you have a new headteacher and your deputy headteacher is back and things are beginning to settle. They have good quality plans to improve your school and ensure that you achieve as well as you are able.

We were impressed by your good manners and lively conversation. Your behaviour is good. We saw evidence that you are keen to do your best and most of you concentrate well in lessons. You know how to keep fit and healthy and we were pleased to learn that you enjoy the out of school activities, particularly the residential visit. The school council is proud of their work and keen to improve the school. You are good at raising money for charities and you told us that you are caring to each other. You say that you feel safe in school and children who join the school during the school year and from other countries are quickly made to feel welcome.

We looked at the standards you reach at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. We think some of you can do better and your headteacher agrees. We have asked for you to be given work that challenges you in all your lessons so that you make faster progress and that you know exactly how to improve your work. You can help with this by always trying your best and making sure that you tell your teachers if you find the work too easy or too hard. We have also asked your headteacher to make sure that all your lessons are good or better and to check the success of the school's plans for improvement against the standards you reach in your work and personal development. I wish you the very best for the future.