

St Oswald's Catholic Primary School, Coppull

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119675
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313385
Inspection dates	20–21 November 2007
Reporting inspector	George Crowther

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	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Laurence Mayne
Headteacher	Mr Simon Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2003
School address	Spendmore Lane Coppull Chorley Lancashire PR7 5DH
Telephone number	01257 791379
Fax number	01257 795516

Age group	4-11
Inspection dates	20–21 November 2007
Inspection number	313385

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. Its social context is diverse but no more or less favourable than most schools. It has an average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Children's knowledge and skills when they start school are broadly typical for their age but vary with each small year group. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but a high proportion of these have a statement of special educational needs. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds and none is at the early stages of learning English. The school has Basic Skills Quality Mark and Investors in People. At the time of the inspection, the school was near the end of a major programme of building work.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Oswald's is a good school. It capitalises on its strong Catholic values to provide a very positive environment for learning where pupils' achievement is good in both their academic and personal skills. A typical parent comment was, 'It's a very friendly, caring place and our child loves every minute at school'. The headteacher has a very clear focus on improving pupils' achievement further with good support from the staff team. As a result of these strengths, pupils enjoy their learning and develop the confidence and skills that prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

Children get a good start in the Reception year. Good teaching and a well planned range of practical activities capture their interest and help them to make good progress in all aspects of their learning. In Years 1 and 2, good teaching helps pupils to build their basic skills quickly and interesting lessons make learning enjoyable so pupils achieve well in most aspects of their work. In Years 3 to 6, pupils make good progress overall. Whilst teaching is good in most lessons, work is not always challenging enough, particularly for the more able pupils in some classes. Nonetheless, standards in Year 6 are significantly above average.

The pupils gain great enjoyment from school and are very keen to learn. They are friendly, polite and very well behaved. Relationships are good and pupils of all ages play together happily, even though space in the playground is restricted by current building work. The pupils have a good understanding about being healthy and they feel safe and cared for. They make an outstanding contribution to the school community. For example, all Year 6 pupils have special responsibilities, such as acting as prayer partners for younger ones. A good understanding of the wider community is developed through work about other faiths and cultures. Pupils' good basic skills and their well developed personal qualities prepare them well for the future. The curriculum is broad and interesting, which helps pupils to enjoy their learning and achieve well in many subjects. Levels of care, guidance and support are good, but learning targets for writing do not always provide enough helpful guidance to pupils on how to improve.

Leadership and management are good. Recent building work has created many challenges to developing other aspects of the school, but leaders have not been distracted. The headteacher's determined leadership has resulted in continued improvements to pupils' achievement. Systems to track pupils' progress, however, are not being used effectively to identify potential underachievement because they are difficult to manage. Through good self-evaluation, leaders have a clear picture of the effectiveness of the school and know what needs to be done next. This puts the school in a good position to improve its work and ensures that it provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Reception class is a very friendly and positive place for learning. Good induction systems help children to settle quickly in a new environment. The recently completed classroom is bright, welcoming and spacious, and an outdoor learning area is being developed. Children achieve well because a good balance of whole-class learning activities and practical activities develop their skills in all areas of learning. For example, children made polar bear models when learning about animals from cold climates, developing physical and creative skills. The staff work very well as a team to stimulate and support children's learning. Activities are interesting, so the

children work well independently and sustain concentration well. The school's data and observations of lessons show that children make good progress; almost all the current children are well on track to reach the learning goals expected at the end of the Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the teaching by ensuring that the challenge of work enables all pupils to make rapid progress.
- Make more effective use of learning targets to raise achievement in writing.
- Simplify the systems that track pupils' progress in order that underachievement is identified earlier and tackled more quickly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children start school with knowledge and skills that are typical for their age and, by Year 6, have achieved well to reach standards that are significantly above average.

Children make good progress in Reception and by the time they join Year 1, standards are generally above those expected. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2, responding to good teaching and building their basic skills well. Lessons are interesting and good fun which contributes greatly to pupils' enjoyment of learning. By the end of Year 2, standards are above average.

Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 to 6 because they are well taught.

The 2007 provisional national test results were significantly above average overall. Results in science were significantly above average, in English they were above average and in mathematics they were average. The school's own data show that pupils' achievement in 2007 was good in English and science, and satisfactory in mathematics. However, the relative weakness in mathematics has been tackled and currently the pupils' achievement is good, and in line with other subjects, by the end of Year 6.

The few pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully involved in lessons and make good progress. Their needs are carefully identified and they are supported sensitively. Whilst more able pupils make good progress in many lessons, the work they are given is not always challenging enough to encourage high enough achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good with some outstanding features. They thoroughly enjoy school and, by Year 6, have very positive attitudes to learning. A typical comment was, 'We have to work hard in lessons but they are fun as well'. A high proportion of parents said their children are eager to go to school. The pupils' exceptionally good behaviour supports their learning effectively. Relationships are extremely positive with pupils of all ages showing great respect for each other. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Events such as 'Anti-bullying Week', when pupils explore moral issues, encourage their understanding of themselves and their place in the wider world. Pupils know how to make healthy choices in the food they eat and the exercise they take, but they are less clear about why these are beneficial. They feel safe at school because they are sure that staff will help them if they have a problem. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school community through a variety

of special responsibilities, such as older ones acting as reading buddies for the younger ones. They also contribute to the church and village community, such as when local councillors consulted the school council about a new development. The good levels of academic and personal skills seen in Year 6 equip pupils well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching in most lessons, and work that is mostly well planned to meet individual needs, help pupils to make good progress. Lively whole-class sessions capture and hold pupils' interest and make them keen to learn. Teachers are making increasingly good use of large computer screens to demonstrate and explain new learning and pupils say they enjoy this. Teachers make lessons enjoyable by using a good variety of activities to encourage learning. For example, whilst some Year 4 and 5 pupils read a poem, others mimed the story which created a great deal of fun and helped everyone to explore the language used. Good relationships and plenty of praise for success are strong features of most lessons. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning, often supporting individuals or a small group. Occasionally, the work is not challenging enough, particularly for the more able pupils, or the teacher leads the lesson for too long and does not allow enough time for the pupils to work independently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good range of activities and experiences, both in and outside lessons, meets the needs of all pupils successfully. For example, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have a carefully planned curriculum and good support. A strong emphasis on improving the curriculum for English and mathematics has helped to raise standards, particularly in Year 6. Pupils say they look forward to the 'Big Write' each Friday when they show how their skills are improving. Pupils are developing their computer skills steadily. A lack of resources for information and communication technology (ICT) has hampered higher achievement, but recent building work has created better facilities. Similarly, a new outdoor learning area for the Foundation Stage will shortly enable staff to expand the curriculum. A strong programme of personal and social education develops pupils' understanding effectively. For example, close links with the local police have enhanced the pupils' awareness of their own safety. Interesting activities outside lessons enrich the curriculum, such as when younger pupils visited a pizzeria in connection with their work about healthy eating. A variety of clubs, as well as educational visits to places of interest, enrich the curriculum significantly.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of pastoral care is outstanding and academic guidance is good. Within a close-knit community, the staff work very hard to ensure each child is cared for, happy and ready to learn, and the pupils look after each other very well. Parents feel these are very strong features of the school. A typical pupil comment was, 'I like the teachers because they help you if things go wrong.' Good links with outside agencies result in extra support when needed. Parents say that children who join the school settle quickly and make friends because everyone is very welcoming. The school provides a secure environment where the required safeguarding

procedures are in place. The school checks regularly on pupils' progress but the existing systems for doing this are unwieldy and do not always identify underachievement quickly enough. Where pupils are falling behind, the school provides extra activities and additional support so they can catch up. The school has started to set learning targets for pupils to help improve their writing but they are not always helpful enough to guide improvements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, well supported by senior colleagues, provides a strong lead in raising standards and sets a clear direction for the development of the school. Catholic values underpin all the school's work and are a key factor in pupils' good personal development. The school is a very positive environment for learning that encourages pupils' achievement and capitalises on their excellent attitudes. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. Leaders have a perceptive understanding of how pupils' learning can improve further. For example, weaknesses in pupils' writing skills were identified, action taken and, as a result, standards rose significantly in the Year 6 national tests. Existing systems to track pupils' progress are not always helpful in identifying key weaknesses quickly enough. The quality of pupils' learning in lessons is monitored carefully. Strengths and weaknesses are identified but there is still work to do to ensure that weaknesses, such as the lack of challenge in some lessons, are improved. Suitably challenging targets for whole school performance help to promote good achievement. The school improvement plan provides a very clear way forward. The strengths in leadership and management put the school in a good position to improve further. Governors provide considerable support and have a good grasp of the school's strengths, particularly as a caring community. They are less well informed about current initiative to raise pupils' achievement.

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.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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	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	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**

22 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Oswald's Catholic Primary School, Coppull, PR7 5DH

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school to find out how well you are doing. There are lots of good things about your school, but I also found a few ways in which it could be even better.

When I visited lessons, or when I was walking around school, everyone was very keen to tell me what they enjoy doing. It seems you like almost everything about school and particularly the clubs and activities outside lessons. I think this is why you try really hard with your work. You behave exceptionally well. For example, when PC Woodward came to talk about bullying, everyone in the hall, including the Reception children, sat and listened carefully. You all get on very well together and the school council said this is one of the best things about your school. From visiting some of your lessons, it is clear you are making good progress, which is helping you to reach standards that are better than many schools.

You say there are lots of interesting activities at school, and I agree. The choir really enjoyed rehearsing for their forthcoming performance. The older pupils have a good understanding of being healthy and staying safe. The jobs you do around school help you to make an outstanding contribution to your community. All the staff look after you exceptionally well and make sure you are happy and ready to learn. Your headteacher and the staff are doing a good job in helping your school to get better.

To become even better your school is going to:

- make sure that the work you are given in lessons is suitably challenging
- make sure that your writing targets are helpful to you and guide how you can improve
- find simpler ways to keep track of your progress so that, if you are not doing well enough, you can be helped to improve more quickly.

Thank you for helping me with the inspection of your school.

Yours sincerely

George Crowther

Lead inspector