

St Chad's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119679
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313388
Inspection date	25 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheila Mawer

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	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Ward
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Coyle
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2005
School address	South Hill Blackburn Road Whittle-le-Woods Chorley Lancashire PR6 8LL
Telephone number	01257 264480
Fax number	01257 232152

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	25 April 2008
Inspection number	313388

© Crown copyright 2008

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.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- current standards in both key stages and numbers of pupils reaching higher levels
- how well pupils are being prepared for life in multicultural Britain
- opportunities for pupils to be involved in the life and work of the school and in their own learning in lessons
- the quality of academic guidance
- the effectiveness of the school's monitoring and self-evaluation in knowing its strengths and weaknesses, and bringing about improvements.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work, the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and records of pupils' progress over time. Discussions were held with staff, governors and pupils, and questionnaires returned by parents were considered. A range of documentation was also examined. 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 self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than average and serves a mainly White British population. Socio-economic circumstances are relatively advantaged and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. In recent years the school has been refurbished. The final phase of a new Foundation Stage unit and a hall started earlier this year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Chad's provides a good education for its pupils. Its strong Christian ethos ensures that pupils are very well cared for and good attention is paid to their personal and academic needs. Pupils feel safe and well supported through the very good relationships the school provides and a philosophy that every child matters. The parents of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities appreciate the good support their children receive and being kept fully informed of their progress. Parents hold the school in high regard and one parent's statement sums up their views well: 'I couldn't ask for a better school for our daughter. She thrives on the praise and encouragement she receives from all the staff'. All aspects of safeguarding are in place and meet national requirements. This successful school gives good value for money.

Good achievement has been maintained since the previous inspection for all pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average and progress is good from the children's starting points at the beginning of Reception, which are broadly typical for their age. The inspection confirms the results in the national tests for Year 6 pupils where standards have been above or significantly above average over the past five years. In the most recent results for 2007, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels was above average. In national assessments by the end of Year 2, standards in 2007 were just above average, with reading being the strongest subject. Very few pupils reached the higher levels in writing or mathematics and boys were not achieving as well as they could. The school responded to these weaknesses and are now teaching pupils in smaller groups for literacy and numeracy. This has resulted in more able pupils and boys achieving well, and pupils currently in Year 2 are making good progress.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Their enthusiasm for school is reflected in high levels of attendance. They enjoy taking part in clubs after school and learning to play musical instruments. Older pupils who act as playground friends to younger pupils are very caring. Behaviour is exemplary and there is hardly ever any bullying. Pupils say, 'Our teachers sort it out straight away'. There is a strong focus on health and fitness, and the school has received several awards. This results in pupils having a good awareness of healthy living. They organise games confidently at lunchtime and choose healthy meals. The school council is effective but keen to take on additional responsibilities. Their role at the moment is mostly feeding back the views of their classmates at meetings. Older pupils enjoy being monitors, but they would like to get more involved in school life. Pupils' success in reaching good standards in the basic skills and learning foreign languages helps to prepare them well for later life.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is heightened by a good curriculum and strengthened by strong partnerships with other schools. Artists from different cultures often work alongside pupils, so extending their spiritual and cultural awareness well. Pupils have a very good understanding of the wider world through strategies such as their extensive fundraising activities and the links they have established with pen friends in different countries. The school promotes social skills effectively through sporting events with other schools. There are very close links with the church and the local community. For example, grandparents often join the pupils for lunch whilst the school choir performs at different events in the area. In lessons, subjects are often taught together as topics to make the learning more interesting for pupils.

The teaching is good. Work is set that challenges pupils to achieve their best. Lessons are thoroughly planned and organised, so no time is lost and pupils are well supported in their learning. Because lessons are interesting, pupils are attentive and work hard to develop important skills. Most lessons are strongly teacher led and the whole class sessions are taught well. This helps pupils to understand new learning and make good progress. At the moment, not all teachers are using the new arrangements for assessment. This means that the good practice that exists in target-setting and marking in some classes is not being shared for the benefit of all pupils and results in inconsistent guidance. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to take the initiative in lessons or be given the responsibility to plan and manage their own learning. In science lessons, for example, older pupils do not always have enough scope to plan and carry out their own investigations. Pupils say they would like more opportunities for problem-solving activities and discussions about school and wider issues so their views can be heard.

Good leadership, management and governance are successfully focused on raising standards. The headteacher establishes strong teamwork with staff and governors. Together they have made good improvements since the previous inspection. They are successfully managing the refurbishment of the school, while maintaining good progress throughout the disruption. Subject leadership, although still not fully developed, is improving through training and support. All leaders contribute to the school improvement plan. They have a mostly accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, through informally checking the teaching and learning. The formal monitoring of teaching and learning and the processes of self-evaluation are in their early stages of development, which is resulting in some inconsistencies through the school, particularly with assessment. The governing body is effective and very supportive and governors work successfully to make the most of each other's strengths. For example, their joint decision with the headteacher to deploy additional staff in the infant classes to help raise standards was well judged. Given the school's track record of often exceeding its challenging targets and promoting good progress, it has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Reception class make good progress. With small numbers and generous levels of staffing, children receive good levels of support and quickly settle into classroom routines. Their personal development flourishes. Teaching is good and there are many opportunities for them to plan their own learning as well as joining adult led groups. Planning is thorough, with a strong practical focus across the different areas of learning, which promotes literacy and numeracy well. In one literacy lesson on how to use information, a group of children followed instructions to make sandwiches for their morning snack. Staff are very skilled in the teacher led sessions in extending the spoken language of the children. Consequently, most children develop into confident and articulate speakers. The school is aware that the outdoor learning area is too small and is limiting provision. It has clear plans to improve this in the much larger area in the new Foundation Stage unit. The Foundation Stage leader is a skilled practitioner. She has recently introduced excellent systems to track the children's progress, which is resulting in activities that are better matched to their individual needs. Pupils join the school in Reception with a range of skills that are generally typical for their age. By the end of the Reception year nearly all reach and some exceed the goals expected of five-year olds.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils more opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility in lessons and in school life.
- Improve the formal monitoring of teaching and learning, and the processes of self-evaluation.

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	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Chad's Catholic Primary School, Lancashire, PR6 8LL

I am writing to thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you and watching you work hard and play happily together. I would like to say a special thank you to the school council and to the pupils who proudly showed me round the school. You go to a good school with a number of strengths. Here are some of them:

- you make good progress and reach above average standards by Year 6
- your behaviour is excellent and you all try hard in lessons
- relationships are very good and you all care for each other really well
- your teachers are good at helping you learn and provide very good support
- you have lots of good opportunities to learn outside of the classroom through visits and clubs after school
- the headteacher and governors work very hard to make the school successful.

You told me how much you enjoy school, but some of you mentioned that you would like more opportunities to plan some of your own learning, especially in science and be given more responsibility around the school. I think that the school council is more than ready to make a greater contribution to how the school runs. Your headteacher and other staff are going to come into lessons more often and you can help them by explaining what you have been learning about.

I know how excited you all are about the new building and the opportunities you will have for things like physical education lessons in the new hall and an outdoor area for the Reception children. I hope you all enjoy learning in the new building and continue to work hard and enjoy your education.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Mawer

Lead inspector