

# St John's Catholic Primary School, Burscough

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119681
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	313389
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Shirley Herring

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

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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	129
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Andrew Montrose
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Elizabeth Devey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 May 2004
<b>School address</b>	Chapel Lane Lathom Ormskirk Lancashire L40 7RA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01704 893523
<b>Fax number</b>	01704 897381

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average size school, though numbers have increased considerably over the past four years. All five classes include more than one age group. The vast majority of pupils are from White British families. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, though the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is above average. Fewer pupils than is usual have a home language other than English. A higher proportion of pupils than is normally the case join the school other than at the start of the school year. The school has strong links with the parish, the local community and other nearby schools. It supports students in Initial Teacher Training. The headteacher has been in post for less than two years.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has some good features especially in personal development which is strongly influenced by the school's Catholic tradition and a good programme for personal, social and health education. Pupils are confident, polite and well behaved. They understand the importance of diet and exercise in a healthy lifestyle. Good relationships make them feel safe and they have trust in adults to resolve their problems. They enjoy the wide range of extra activities on offer, but their enjoyment of lessons depends on the liveliness of the teaching, which is variable. They make a good contribution to the community through varied responsibilities in school and participation in parish events. They are suitably prepared for the future. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good overall. Pupils have a sound understanding of their own culture, but their understanding of other faiths and cultures is limited.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and has improved as the school has overcome barriers caused by unavoidable staffing difficulties. Pupils make satisfactory progress and leave school attaining standards that are broadly average. The results of the 2007 national tests identified writing as an area of weakness. The school's focus on this aspect is leading to improvements, with more pupils now working at a higher level in both key stages. Teaching is satisfactory. Most teachers plan work to match the needs of different pupils. Lessons are not organised sufficiently well at Key Stage 1. Consequently, pupils do not have enough support to enable them to be fully focused on their work throughout. This reduces the effectiveness of pupils' learning. Progress accelerates in Year 5 and 6 because lessons are interesting and well paced and expectations of pupils are clear.

The curriculum largely meets pupils' needs. It is satisfactory, and there is a good provision for the arts and physical education. There is a suitable emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills though the school recognises that more needs to be done to improve standards.

There is a strong commitment to the welfare of each individual by all staff and governors so the quality of care, guidance and support is good. The skilled support staff encourage pupils well so those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to the rest of their class. Good procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are helping to identify and address any underachievement more quickly, though it is too soon for this to have fully impacted on test results. Helpful marking and clear targets are now providing pupils with good guidance to improve their work.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and actions to improve standards are beginning to have an effect. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The school is working closely with local authority consultants to improve the quality of education. Inspection evidence indicated that this partnership is impacting positively on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. The effectiveness of the senior management's actions in improving assessment and writing shows that the school has a sound capacity to improve. Several parents feel that there is insufficient communication about what is happening in school and their children's progress. The weekly newsletter, the termly newsletter and frequency of parents' meetings, show that information to parents is satisfactory.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children enter the school with a range of skills that are broadly typical for their age. They make steady progress and most achieve the recommended goals by the time they enter Year 1. The accommodation for the Reception class has recently been extended to improve provision and accommodate increasing numbers. It is now bright, spacious and airy with good quality resources which are inviting to use. The teacher is working closely with a local authority consultant to develop the use of the new facility and has been successful in creating activities, indoors and outside, to support all areas of learning. While these activities are interesting they are not sufficiently focussed on what children need to learn next and to build on what they already know. Consequently, some children do not progress as quickly as they could. There are good procedures for introducing children to school and so they settle quickly.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Organise lessons more effectively in Key Stage 1 to ensure that all pupils are fully involved in their learning.
- Ensure that the planned activities in the Reception Class have a clear purpose, based on what children need to learn, to improve the progress they are making.
- Provide more opportunities to prepare pupils for life in a culturally diverse society.

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

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are average by Year 6. In the 2007 assessments in Year 2 standards were below average and some pupils did not achieve as well as they could. There was a particular weakness in writing and no pupil reached the higher level. Prompt action by the school has led to improvements this year. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils are now working at a level appropriate to their age and the proportion working at a higher level is broadly average. Progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 2. Results of the 2007 national tests for Year 6 pupils were average in English, mathematics and science. This marked an improvement on the previous year's disappointing results and was due to action taken by the school to improve assessment procedures and the provision for science. The current Year 6 pupils have sustained this improvement although the school recognises that standards could be even higher. Year 6 pupils are on course to meet their challenging targets in this year's national tests. The school's current focus on improving writing is helping to improve standards throughout the school.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language are well supported and this enables them to make similar progress to the rest of their class.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils are polite and confident and behave well. They have a sound understanding of their own culture but their appreciation of other cultures is limited. They understand about the importance of diet and exercise in a healthy lifestyle and this is recognised in the Healthy Schools Award. Pupils say they are confident to speak to an adult in school should they have a problem and particularly appreciate the fact that an experienced member of the support staff is available at lunchtime to discuss any matters of concern. Where lessons are lively pupils enjoy their learning, though this is less marked in those lessons where the pace is slower. Attendance is average. Pupils make a good contribution to the community and accept responsibilities readily. They elect representatives to the school council and older ones enjoy helping younger children as playground leaders. They speak with pleasure about their fund-raising to purchase a climbing frame and also to support charities. Sound basic skills and good links with the High School provide a suitable preparation for the future.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in Upper Key Stage 2 where lessons are lively and challenging and learning moves at a quick pace. The school's assessments show that progress is accelerated for these older pupils. In Key Stage 1 the pace of learning is slower. The range of activities planned for different groups is not well enough managed to ensure all pupils remain involved with their work. This reduces the effectiveness of the teaching.

Teachers give good guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. For example, marking is good and is used well in both key stages to help pupils to improve. All pupils are set targets and in all lessons teachers give clear reminders to help pupils to concentrate on these. For example, some pupils in Year 2 were reminded about using capital letters and full stops, and this is helping pupils to develop their skills. The generous number of skilled support staff is well deployed and supports learning well.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum, with strengths in the good range of additional activities on offer, generally meets the needs of the pupils. Curriculum planning provides suitable progression and coverage of subjects in the mixed-age classes. The good programme for personal, social and health education supports pupils' personal development well. Teachers extend literacy and numeracy skills to other subjects and this is helping to raise standards. The purchase of a set of laptops is helping to extend the use of information and communication technology in learning. There are effective programmes to support the learning of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Pupils benefit from the contribution of specialist staff for music and physical education, consequently there is a thriving brass band and other musical activities and pupils take part in a wide variety of sports tournaments.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Staff and governors give a high priority to the care and welfare of pupils. All the recommended procedures for safeguarding are in place. Pupils with learning difficulties and /or disabilities receive good support to help them take advantage of all that the school has to offer. One parent commented on how her child, who had been reluctant to speak in another school, had gained in confidence in the small, friendly community and was now happy to speak in front of the whole school. The small number of pupils whose home language is not English receive a good level of individual support to help them play a full part in school life. The school has developed good procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and identifying underachievement at an early stage. Though it is too soon to judge the full impact of these new procedures there are clear signs of improvement in pupils' progress. Pupils receive good guidance to help them to improve through helpful marking and individual targets for literacy and numeracy. Good behaviour and effort are supported and reinforced in the weekly achievement assembly.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The school's accurate analysis and evaluation of its work show the headteacher has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. She has dealt effectively to reduce the impact of the instability in staffing (now resolved), over an extended period, though this has proved a barrier to taking the school forward more quickly. Nevertheless, effective marking, clear individual targets and good assessment and tracking procedures have been introduced and are helping to improve progress, though these have not yet fully impacted on standards. At its own request the school is working closely and effectively with local authority consultants to improve the quality of education. Though results fell slightly short of the challenging targets set in 2007, standards improved. The headteacher has been ably supported by a senior teacher this school year. She has provided a good role model of teaching and of subject leadership which can be shared with colleagues and the school is now in a better position to move forward. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have provided valued and effective support during a period of change. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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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?	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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

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

### 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	3
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<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.

## Annex A

**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	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	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

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

7 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Catholic Primary School, Burscough, Lancashire, L40 7RA

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently to see how well you are doing. Yours is a satisfactory school which means that there are many good things about it, but there are some ways I think it could be even better.

I enjoyed talking to you all in class and to members of the school council. You know that the school takes good care of you all. Everyone gets on well together but if there is a problem you know that an adult will help you sort it out quickly. I was pleased that you all knew your targets and I agree with you that this will help you to improve your work. You behave well in class and you told me how much you enjoyed using the equipment in the playground. You have a lovely space to play in. You are rightly proud of the money you have raised for additional equipment in school, such as the climbing frame, and for charities.

Teachers take a lot of time to mark your work carefully and to make suggestions to help you to improve. You are making satisfactory progress in your work but some of you could do even better. Your lessons are sometimes interesting, but some group activities are not as effective as they could be in helping you to learn.

I have asked the school to do these things to improve your learning:

- make sure that pupils in Key Stage 1 know exactly what they should be doing in groups and get on with their work
- make sure that all of the activities in the lovely new Reception class help the children to make good progress
- help you to learn more about people of different faiths and cultures.

I enjoyed seeing you all in costume for World Book Day and guessing your character. I hope it encourages you to read even more books.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Herring

Lead inspector