

St Modwen's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124326
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314888
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Bowen
Headteacher	James Emery
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2003
School address	Belvoir Road Burton-on-Trent DE13 0RA
Telephone number	01283 239050
Fax number	01283 239053

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Children start this average-sized primary school with levels of skills below those expected for their age. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, a significant number of whom are at the early stages of learning English, is above average. The school has gained Football Charter accreditation and this year, it is working towards the information and communication technology (ICT) mark and a Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. Pupils achieve well and standards are above average by Year 6. The steps towards this begin in the Foundation Stage where provision is excellent. Strong and purposeful leadership and management, and a measured approach to managing change and introducing new initiatives, have resulted in very effective teamwork amongst all staff. This in turn is improving pupils' learning. The school cares deeply for all its pupils, its Catholic ethos permeates all of its work. Staff and pupils respect, value and help each other, and reach out to the local and wider community. Parents recognise this, many describing the school as a happy place where their children do well. Pupils know how to keep safe, fit and healthy, and how to keep others safe. Their behaviour is exemplary, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is excellent and they really enjoy being at school. This allows them to work and play together free of harassment of any sort. Progress in mathematics has improved in the past year and is now good overall. However, it is not yet even in all year groups, and mathematical skills are not sufficiently promoted in other subjects. The curriculum does, however, promote literacy, and especially ICT skills, well. It is planned effectively, and an excellent range of extra-curricular clubs and activities very much enriches pupils' learning and personal development. Skilful teaching, including the regular, accurate assessment of pupils' learning, ensures that all pupils receive the support they need, including when they find difficulty in learning. The very competent teaching assistants play a great part in this, as do the school's good links with external agencies. Exemplary marking in some classes very successfully moves pupils' learning on. It focuses on pupils' targets, teachers expect pupils to respond to it and pupils deepen their understanding by doing so. In some other classes, however, teachers' marking does not always provide pupils with clear enough guidance on how to improve, and pupils rarely correct their work as a result of it. Governors support the school well and keep a close eye on its work. The school improvement plan has a manageable number of carefully considered priorities. However, the criteria by which the success of progress towards those priorities is measured, are not sufficiently focused on gains in pupils' progress. Nevertheless, the school knows itself well and it has good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Excellent induction procedures create a strong bond between home and school that continues into all age groups. It contributes greatly to the outstanding progress seen in this age group. Almost all children reach the goals expected nationally for the end of Reception. Children very much enjoy the exciting activities that arise out of the imaginative planning that follows staff's meticulous recording of their progress. Very effective teamwork amongst the staff successfully encourages the children to share, take turns, listen to and help each other, and combine their skills to solve real-life problems. This was exemplified particularly well in the children's joint efforts to arrange guttering at the right angle to enable water to flow fast enough to sail their boats. Adults know precisely when to intervene in such activities, and when to listen and encourage children to think for themselves. As a result, children grow in confidence and independence, asking for help if they need it and readily sharing information about their work and themselves. Staff use the well resourced outdoor area exceptionally well to promote learning, and the children's behaviour is exemplary, indoors and out.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' achievement in mathematics further in all year groups and promote mathematical skills better in other subjects.
- Achieve consistency in teachers' marking, and ensure that pupils both respond to it and understand the potential this has to help them learn faster.
- Focus the school improvement plan more clearly on the impact the priorities are intended to have on pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average in Year 6 and achievement is good. Pupils throughout the school speak clearly and confidently, and listen carefully. This was particularly evident in their discussions with inspectors and in an assembly where pupils in Years 5 and 6 presented the work they had been doing on friendship and bullying to the rest of the school. The school's success in improving writing has led to the above average standards in Year 6. Here, pupils write well in different styles and with a good sense of audience. Data held by the school and the pupils' Year 6 national test results both indicated that progress was only satisfactory in mathematics last year. Extra time for mathematics and a focus on improving pupils' ability to recall number facts quickly and use them to solve real life problems has changed this. However, while progress in mathematics is now good overall, it is not yet equally so in all year groups. The work continues to achieve this and interactive displays around the school support it well. Pupils reach above average standards in ICT, an area that was weak at the previous inspection. Their progress in ICT is rapid.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

As school councillors, play leaders and monitors, pupils help each other and gain a good understanding of what it means to be a responsible citizen. They know their place in the world and reach out to others, for example, by raising a great deal of money for charity. Their good attendance and the very low incidence of bullying show how much they enjoy school and adopt safe practices. Their very high participation in extra-curricular sporting activities contributes to their excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles. Pupils work and play together really well. This is because the school successfully teaches them to understand and respect the similarities and differences between different faiths and cultures. Following a successful retreat, pupils requested a Peace Garden be made in the school grounds. They have used ICT exceptionally well to design and cost it and the school council is successfully managing a relatively large budget to bring it to reality. As a result of all of this, and their good progress in basic skills, pupils leave school as mature youngsters, really well prepared for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work rate. This contributes greatly to the pupils' good progress and personal development. It successfully enables teachers to teach the whole class, groups and individuals according to need. They plan their work well to

do this, and use their very effective support staff to help them. The level of challenge is particularly high in some lessons and leads to rapid progress for the pupils. In these sometimes outstanding lessons, highly skilled questioning keeps all pupils on their toes, as teachers constantly assess and challenge each pupil's thinking. Promoting pupils' learning by involving them in assessing their own and others' work is improving. It is strong in some but not all year groups. For example, teachers do not always refer to pupils' targets in their marking, and sometimes miss opportunities to show pupils how to improve their own work. Classrooms are stimulating and attractive and regular homework contributes effectively to the successful partnership between home and school. Homework often involves the use of ICT, and a lunchtime club ensures that pupils who do not have a computer at home are not disadvantaged in any way.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum promotes literacy skills well, and ICT skills exceptionally well in all subjects. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to use and consolidate their numeracy skills in other subjects although these are not explicitly planned and therefore not as effective in promoting pupils' progress. The good emphasis on health and safety and the very strong links between school, parents and the wider community contribute greatly to pupils' personal development and well-being. The excellent range of very well attended extra-curricular activities, which include the breakfast club and many visits and visitors, considerably enriches and extends the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support Grade: 2 The school's highly caring ethos, which includes robust safeguarding arrangements, ensures that all pupils work and play together free of harassment of any sort. Excellent links with parents and external agencies contribute greatly to this. The school very successfully includes all pupils in everything it has to offer, promoting their health, safety and well-being exceptionally well. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils state confidently that they would turn to an adult in school if they were worried about anything at all. Academic guidance is good overall. Pupils know their targets and are becoming increasingly involved in assessing their progress towards them. This good practice is not yet consistent across the school. Not all teachers require pupils to improve, correct or complete their work after it has been marked, thereby missing opportunities to consolidate or extend pupils' learning fully.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's very clear sense of purpose is fully shared by staff and governors. Staff report that the headteacher values every pupil and every member of staff, therefore they in turn value each other. This is evident in the strong sense of teamwork throughout the school, which is successfully improving pupils' progress. The school sets itself ambitious targets and monitors its progress towards them. When initiatives successfully accelerate pupils' progress, as has happened in writing and mathematics this year, it confidently raises those targets. Perceptive and accurate monitoring and evaluation by the headteacher and key staff provide

teachers with good guidance on how to improve. Areas for development are systematically followed up through, for example, team teaching involving subject leaders. Governance is good. Governors ask the right questions about how well the school is doing and check the impact of their spending on pupils' progress, as in ICT. Their improvement plan has the correct priorities. However, the success criteria by which they intend to measure the school's progress towards its priorities, while focusing on improving teaching, do not focus sufficiently on improving pupils' learning. This somewhat limits its potential to accelerate pupils' progress.

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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	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

- 1 February 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of St Modwens Catholic Primary School, Burton-on-Trent DE13 0RA Thank you for the warm welcome you gave my colleague and me when we visited your school. It was a real delight to talk to you because you are so confident and polite, and clearly very proud of your school. You and your parents told us how happy you are there and how much you enjoy learning. This is evident in your excellent behaviour and good attendance. We also saw it in how well you all get on together, helping each other and contributing to the life of the school, for example, through the school council. Your plans for the Peace Garden look really good and we hope it creates the quiet area for reflection that you want from it. You and your parents are both right in thinking you go to a good school that cares deeply for you and wants you to do your best at all times. Your headteacher plays a great part in this because he makes sure that the curriculum on which your learning is based, is planned and taught well. As a result, you make good progress and reach above average standards by the time you are in Year 6. Within all the good things the school does, we have asked it to concentrate more on three things to help you make even better progress. These are:
 - making sure your progress in mathematics is equally good in all year groups, and giving you more opportunities to use your mathematical skills in different subjects
 - making sure that all teachers mark your work equally well and then require you to do your corrections so you can show you know what to do to improve
 - when the leaders and managers write the plan showing what the school intends to do to improve, they state clearly how their decisions will benefit your learning. You can help with this by doing your corrections regularly and by continuing to work hard at all times. We hope you will continue to enjoy learning as much in the future as you do now. Yours sincerely
Doris Bell Lead inspector

Annex B

1 February 2008

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Modwens Catholic Primary School, Burton-on-Trent DE13
ORA**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave my colleague and me when we visited your school. It was a real delight to talk to you because you are so confident and polite, and clearly very proud of your school. You and your parents told us how happy you are there and how much you enjoy learning. This is evident in your excellent behaviour and good attendance. We also saw it in how well you all get on together, helping each other and contributing to the life of the school, for example, through the school council. Your plans for the Peace Garden look really good and we hope it creates the quiet area for reflection that you want from it.

You and your parents are both right in thinking you go to a good school that cares deeply for you and wants you to do your best at all times. Your headteacher plays a great part in this because he makes sure that the curriculum on which your learning is based, is planned and taught well. As a result, you make good progress and reach above average standards by the time you are in Year 6.

Within all the good things the school does, we have asked it to concentrate more on three things to help you make even better progress. These are:

- making sure your progress in mathematics is equally good in all year groups, and giving you more opportunities to use your mathematical skills in different subjects
- making sure that all teachers mark your work equally well and then require you to do your corrections so you can show you know what to do to improve
- when the leaders and managers write the plan showing what the school intends to do to improve, they state clearly how their decisions will benefit your learning.

You can help with this by doing your corrections regularly and by continuing to work hard at all times. We hope you will continue to enjoy learning as much in the future as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell
Lead inspector