

St Nicholas Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108029
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	324690
Inspection date	10 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Robert Robinson

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	260
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
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr T Britten
Headteacher	Mr P Lawson
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Oakwood Lane Leeds West Yorkshire LS9 6QY

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	10 March 2009
Inspection number	324690

Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the standards and pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and learning and the impact of the leadership and management. The inspectors collected information from lesson observations, examination of pupils' work, responses to parental questionnaires, interviews with staff, pupils and governors and scrutiny of documents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessment, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average school. The socio-economic circumstances of the local area are much lower than average. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision is for children in their Reception Year. Eligibility for free school meals is well above average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school serves the whole local community not solely Catholic families. Most pupils attending live close to the school. The school is an Investor in People. It has gained the Activemark (Gold), Artsmark (Silver) and Healthy School National Advanced Standard awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Nicholas Primary provides an outstanding education for its pupils. The first-rate leadership and management of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, supported by staff and governors, have enabled the school to improve very well since its last inspection. The strengths in all aspects of its work and its track record over time provide the school with excellent capacity to continue to develop. Links with the local community, other education providers are very well established and this benefits pupils' education. Equality of opportunity is promoted exceptionally well. A key strength throughout the school is the superb care, guidance and support for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language. Pupils love school and the way the staff look after them, as school councillors stated, 'teachers never give up on us'.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. They build well on their prior attainment in Years 1 and 2. As a result, standards in Year 2 are currently below, but close to those expected. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' progress is fast. Standards by the end of Year 6 are consistently at least in line with, and sometimes above, the national average in English, mathematics and science. Considering children's low starting point in Reception, predominantly average standards by the end of Year 6 represent excellent progress by all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, is fostered exceptionally well. Pupils are very well aware of the need to lead healthy lifestyles through sensible eating and regular exercise. They benefit greatly from personal, social, health and citizenship education in their awareness of how to keep safe. Enjoyment of school is supported by good attendance rates which are substantially higher than similar schools. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are courteous to staff, visitors and to one another. They are proud of their school and take every opportunity to help in its smooth running. Pupils are active in developing skills to help them in later life. For example, they make high quality seasonal cards to sell to pupils, staff and families. Profits are donated to an African school. Pupils are active savers through a school bank that some older pupils run. Their first-rate attitudes to learning, their behaviour and the progress pupils make during their time at the school prepare them supremely well for future learning.

The quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum are outstanding. Many lessons have exceptionally good features. Pupils work industriously in whole-class session, small groups or independently. Most lessons match closely new learning to pupils' previous achievements. Ample opportunities are provided for pupils to investigate, to find out things for themselves, as well as to share ideas with others. Pupils' communication skills are developed extremely well through the use of drama. This also benefits pupils' confidence. Basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) are enhanced through very well thought out, enjoyable activities, as well as through purposeful links with other subjects. The pace of learning is brisk. Teaching assistants have an important role in lessons. Together, with teachers, they spur on the learning of identified pupils or small groups. Thorough checks on pupils' progress enables education plans to be implemented quickly to remedy any underachievement or to help those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

A high performing team of senior leaders ensure superb quality educational and pastoral care for pupils. The quality of pupils' learning is checked rigorously, though opportunities for staff

to work alongside each other to share best practice are not formally planned. Governors ensure all current government safeguarding requirements are in place. Tremendous improvements have been made since the last inspection in developing a highly effective tailor-made system to electronically track the progress of individual pupils, specific groups and classes. It is used extremely well by staff to check on pupils' progress towards their termly targets and to provide information to direct future education plans for all. It is also a powerful tool to check the success of initiatives.

The school embraces the development of community cohesion extremely well through its links with the church, pupils' families and the local community. As well as a strong focus on the Christian faith, understanding of other major world faiths is explored. For example, members of the local Sikh community work within the school to extend pupils' understanding of their faith and lifestyles. Through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities and links with other schools, pupils gained a deeper understanding of different national and international communities.

Parents praise all aspects of the school highly. Typical parental comments include, 'A strong family feeling which creates an atmosphere in which children are happy and this facilitates their learning', 'fantastic school, one of the best and very well managed' and 'proud to say my children are educated at St Nicholas School'.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children have a superb start to their schooling. They achieve exceptionally well, particularly in personal, social and emotional development. Children's skills when they start school are at a very low level. Parents are actively involved in their children's learning. They appreciate the excellent care for their children's welfare. This results in rapid progress in children's personal development. Children quickly settle into school routines and develop their skills well in other areas of learning because of outstanding teaching. Children's skills by the end of Reception are broadly typical in personal development, though remain below expected in other areas of learning with few children reaching age-expected skills in communication, language and literacy or in their mathematical development. The teaching is highly effective. The clear planning of activities helps children to develop their learning quickly both indoors and outdoors. There is an appropriate balance of child-initiated and adult-led tasks. Activities are exciting and capture children's interest in learning. Children relate well to one another and behave well. Staff provide very good help for all children. The needs of those learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are quickly recognised and successfully supported. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed very well. For example, careful checking of children's progress guides future lesson plans in an exceptional way.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide opportunities for teachers to share outstanding practice to maintain and continue to improve the high quality of teaching.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

The inspection team really enjoyed the day we spent with you. Yours is an outstanding school. This is because it is run extremely well by the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other staff and governors. Teaching and learning are first rate and build on a superb curriculum. As a result, you make extremely fast progress in your learning. Many of your lessons have excellent features. This adds to your enjoyment and pace of learning.

During the time you are at the school your achievement is outstanding. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the youngest children have a wonderful start to schooling. After that you progress really well to reach, by the end of Year 6, nationally expected levels for your age and sometimes go beyond them.

I was very impressed by your excellent behaviour. At all times, you were polite and courteous. You enjoy learning and appreciate all the school provides. You get on exceptionally well with each other and the staff. The school ensures that all pupils are treated equally well. The school serves your local area very well and provides you with a deepening awareness of local, national and international communities, as well as major world faiths. You are extremely well prepared for your future learning.

Parents are very pleased with the education experiences you have at the school and the care provided for you. The headteacher knows how to improve the school further. However, I have asked the school to provide opportunities for teachers to work alongside each other to share best practice so teaching continues to improve.

I trust that you will continue to work with the staff and your headteacher to help them to continue to improve the school. I wish you well for the future.