

St Edward's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111319
Local Authority	Halton
Inspection number	325346
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Jones

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)	117
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	Mrs A Farrell
Headteacher	Mrs J Lawrence
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wivern Place Runcorn Cheshire WA7 1RZ

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2009
Inspection number	325346

Telephone number
Fax number

01928 572317
01928 576034

Age group	4-11
Inspection dates	16-17 March 2009
Inspection number	325346

© Crown copyright 2009

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 small primary school close to the town centre. The school serves a residential area with significant social and economic disadvantage. Some pupils live outside the immediate locality. The school offers Early Years Foundation Stage provision in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. As a result of the small numbers in school, most of the teaching is carried out in mixed-age classes. The school also provides childcare in its breakfast club. Most pupils are White British with a very small but growing number of pupils from minority ethnic groups. A small proportion speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than in most schools. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school holds the Artsmark, Activemark, Healthy Schools and Investors In People awards and has Change School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. The excellent leadership and vision of the dedicated headteacher are at the heart of the school's continuing success. She is superbly supported by a highly skilled and dedicated staff and an extremely resourceful and effective governing body. The school has made excellent improvements since the last inspection and provides outstanding value for money.

Children make excellent progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and through both Key Stages 1 and 2 to reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. Standards are above average in mathematics and science while those in English are broadly in line with it. These standards represent excellent achievement from children's starting points at the beginning of Reception. Pupils also reach standards in information and communication technology (ICT) that are above those expected nationally. The school quickly identifies children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; those with exceptional gifts and talents; and the very small number who speak English as an additional language. The consequent support and opportunities they receive ensure that all pupils make excellent progress during their time at school; exemplifying how very well the school promotes equality and diversity. The school effectively gathers and interprets data to provide personalised learning for every individual pupil. This contributes very significantly to pupils' excellent achievement and personal development. The school's buildings and resources have been extended and updated and have further enhanced the quality and effectiveness of pupils' learning. The school monitors its work in depth and the quality of its self-evaluation is outstanding.

The school has worked very successfully to develop links within its local and wider communities and has forged relationships with schools internationally. This outstanding contribution to community cohesion means pupils have excellent knowledge and awareness of local, national and global issues. Pupils really enjoy their time in school. Attendance is above the national average and pupils are very keen to participate in lessons and the wide range of activities the school provides for them. Their behaviour is outstanding. They show genuine warmth towards each other and are respectful and considerate to visitors. Pupils say they feel safe and that things are quickly remedied on the few occasions that pupils fall out. They have exceptional opportunities to take exercise and develop awareness of the need to lead a healthy lifestyle. They take responsibility from an early age and are given many opportunities to serve the school and community. The school council is given a real say in running the school. It manages its own budget and has contributed to the cost of the improved playground equipment. Fundraising for school and for a range of charities is highly developed. Pupils' knowledge of the world of work is further enhanced by the outstanding opportunities to experience commercial and enterprise activities. This, together with their proficiency in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, means that they are extremely well prepared for success in later life.

The outstanding teaching has a consistently strong impact on pupils' learning throughout the school. Staff respond extremely well to the challenges of teaching mixed-age classes. There is an excellent match of setting work that meets the individual needs of pupils. The high expectations of work and behaviour and the outstanding relationships between pupils and adults are a significant factor in pupils' strong achievement. The school's curriculum, praised at the previous inspection, has been further extended and enriched. The school is involved in the national Change School initiative. This innovative three-year programme, begun in September 2008, aims to make learning even more individualised, relevant and creative for every pupil.

Since this initiative is so new, the school has not yet devised a way to measure the impact of these changes on pupils' personal development and academic achievement.

Staff place the utmost priority on pupils' care and well-being. They know pupils very well and a strong family atmosphere permeates the school. The school's academic guidance is excellent. Teachers set clear, challenging and attainable targets for improvement and carefully track pupils' progress towards them. Pupils are given the advice they need to take the next steps in their learning. This contributes significantly to their outstanding achievement.

Given the school's sustained performance, it demonstrates outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make an outstanding start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They enter Reception with skills and abilities that are below those expected for their age in most areas. They are well below expectations in their personal and social development and their communication, language and literacy skills. Excellent links and relationships are soon established with parents and carers. As a result, children settle very quickly and make outstanding progress to reach standards broadly in line with the expectations for their age at the end of Reception. They remain below expectations in communication, language and literacy but nevertheless progress is good in this area of learning. This success is the result of particularly effective teaching and a well thought out programme of learning that promotes excellent progress in all areas. Children's achievement is further enhanced by the high quality of ongoing assessment. Children's outstanding progress in their personal development is the result of the excellent use made of the exciting indoor and outdoor learning areas that have been relocated and refurbished since the previous inspection. Activities are adapted daily to meet children's individual needs and interests and they soon develop positive attitudes to their learning, behave extremely well, and get on very well together. Staff ensure that an appropriate balance is maintained between child-initiated and adult-led activities to ensure highly effective learning. The Reception children and the Year 1 pupils who share the class, benefit from the opportunities they have to socialise and share experiences. The Early Years Foundation Stage promotes the welfare of its children exceptionally well. Children are safe, very happy and motivated and start to become confident and inquisitive learners as a result. Leadership and management are outstanding, with the highly resourceful and experienced coordinator leading her skilled staff by example. Teamwork is very strong and staff are deployed most effectively within the very well organised areas for learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the school's leadership and management team evaluate the impact of changes to the curriculum on pupils' achievement and personal development and adjust practice accordingly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement overall is outstanding. Pupils build on the excellent start they make in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Previous results and current standards in Key Stage 1 confirm this sustained improvement. Standards in all areas are now above national averages and are a result

of the school's strategies to improve pupils' performance in writing, and speaking and listening. Provisional results in the 2008 Key Stage 2 national tests show that pupils reached above average standards in mathematics and science and broadly average standards in English. The school's data show that pupils currently in Key Stage 2 are working at similar levels. Given their low starting points, this represents outstanding progress. Pupils are also securing good standards in ICT. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the very small number who speak English as an additional language, progress as well as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. They have an infectious enthusiasm for all the school offers. 'I can't wait to get here in the morning,' was a typical comment made by pupils. Attendance is good, because of the strong partnership between home and school. Parents and carers are delighted with the school's work and approach to education. They say, 'This is a wonderful school and my children are valued members of the school family.' Pupils' cheerful, optimistic attitudes are carried over into their learning. They appreciate the excellent meals provided for them and have exceptional awareness of health and safety issues. Pupils are given a real voice in the running of the school. They are consulted about what and how they should learn and respond enthusiastically to the opportunities provided to take responsibility. As well as serving on the school council, they can undertake roles as play leaders, sports leaders, road safety officers and recycling officers. Pupils successfully raise funds for their school and charities and their environmental work with the Wigg Island Rangers is an excellent example of their commitment to improving their local community. Lessons and visits pupils undergo give them a very good understanding and knowledge of other faiths and cultures. The opportunities to join the thriving credit union, and to work with Age Concern and the Education Business Partnership are examples of how the school provides an extra dimension to the preparedness of its pupils for success in later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding and underpins pupils' excellent achievement and development. They enjoy the well-paced, stimulating lessons and the tasks that are well matched to their abilities. As a result, they make rapid progress and like to be challenged. Staff use a range of strategies to motivate and engage all pupils. The excellent use of computers and electronic whiteboards adds to the appeal and effectiveness of lessons. The very effective contribution made by the teaching assistants helps secure pupils' outstanding achievement. Pupils' speaking and listening skills and self-confidence improve enormously as they move through this highly effective school. This is because the school prioritises the learning of these skills from the earliest age, and has developed staff expertise in this area. The school uses displays and praise and rewards extremely well to encourage pupils to achieve and improve their personal development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. It makes a very significant contribution to pupils' outstanding achievement and personal development. The school has begun to implement its exciting and ambitious plans to improve its curriculum further through the Change School initiative. This review of the curriculum allows the school to work with partners and consultants. The aim of linking subjects together to take a theme-based and creative approach to learning is not new. However, the vision, depth and range of the project, and the resources and funding available to the school, make it an exceptional opportunity for curriculum improvement. Work has already begun on creative approaches to music, drama and mathematics involving all pupils. The project has inspired staff, governors and pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All pupils are cared for extremely well. The school's pastoral support systems are very well developed and the school makes effective use of strong partnerships with outside agencies to cater for the needs of individual pupils. Teaching assistants receive training to improve the achievement and personal development of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents greatly appreciate the care offered by the breakfast club. Staff are positive, caring and encouraging. Pupils have confidence in staff and the procedures for dealing with their concerns. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet current government requirements. The conscientious caretaker and the loyal cleaning staff take pride in keeping the school impeccably clean and well maintained. The academic guidance pupils receive is a strength of the school and an important factor in their excellent achievement. All pupils have individual targets that are regularly reviewed. They are involved in assessing their own work, and advice given by teachers helps them to improve their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school's leadership and management strive to even greater success. Teamwork, openness and a commitment to embracing opportunities to improve the education of every pupil are the hallmarks of the school's work. All staff are keen to develop their considerable expertise further through a well-developed programme of professional development. They are all involved in checking the work of the school. Review of the new curriculum is built into school planning. However, the school is not yet able to assess the impact of the curriculum changes on the school's overall effectiveness. The excellent data produced concerning the attainment and progress of every pupil is used well by staff to tailor lessons to meet the needs of their pupils. The school's strategic planning is detailed with a clear focus on school improvement. All members of the school community are included in shaping school policy, and this adds to their commitment and sense of ownership. The school greatly benefits from the contribution of its skilled and dedicated governing body. It makes highly effective use of the wide-ranging talents of its members in supporting the school and in carrying out its role as a critical friend.

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?	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	2
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**

Thank you for being friendly and helpful when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed my visit very much and would like to share with you what I found.

You attend an outstanding school. You work hard and make excellent progress and reach above average standards. You told me you feel safe, and that you really enjoy school. Many of you take part in the clubs and activities provided, especially sport, music, drama and business. I was very pleased with your behaviour and the way you get on with each other and your teachers. Your school council makes sure your ideas are listened to by staff and governors and has helped provide you with extra playground equipment. Many of you are proud to serve your school and help others as road safety officers, play leaders, sports leaders and recycling officers. I was very impressed with your fundraising activities, and the links and friendships you enjoy with schools here and in other parts of the world.

I would like you to do even better in your work and have suggested something that will help. Everyone at St Edward's wants the very best for you. That is why your school has begun to introduce many more exciting activities and interesting visits and visitors into your learning. I have asked your teachers to check your progress very carefully so that they can be sure these changes in the curriculum are improving your skills and achievements, just as teachers intended. You can help by continuing to work hard and trying your best.