

St Clement's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111320
Local Authority	Halton
Inspection number	325347
Inspection date	6 May 2009
Reporting inspector	John Heap

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)	188
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 Williams
Headteacher	Mrs M Morgan
Date of previous school inspection	27 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Oxford Road Runcorn Cheshire WA7 4NX

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	6 May 2009
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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: are standards high enough in writing; whether pupils are provided with sufficient opportunities to use their basic literacy skills in all subjects; how well pupils are prepared for life in a diverse society and the quality of the school's work to promote community cohesion. The inspectors collected evidence from school documentation; national data; interviews with pupils, staff and governors; observing lessons and other activities and analysing parents' questionnaires and comments. 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, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This smaller than average primary school serves a mainly White British population and a very small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils mostly live near to the school, but a significant minority come from further afield. Few pupils are entitled to free school meals although the area has some signs of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Reception class. The school has several awards, including Healthy Schools, Activemark and Basic Skills status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that it is outstanding and provides excellent value for money. Parents and pupils rightly hold the school in very high regard and a typical parental view is: 'Generally, I would consider St Clement's an excellent school which gives children a great start in life ... Superbly led and managed.' Several of the parents rightly point to the excellence of leadership and management as the decisive factor. The headteacher continues to provide the outstanding leadership identified in the previous inspection report. She ensures that the school strikes a splendid balance between fostering pupils' consistently high academic standards and their excellent personal development. As a result, there has been further improvement since the last inspection.

Pupils' personal development and well-being continues to be outstanding. Pupils say they thoroughly enjoy school and their consistently above average attendance confirms this. Exemplary social and moral development means that pupils' behaviour, and the relationships they forge with adults and each other, are excellent. Pupils are polite, considerate and thoughtful because that is the way they are treated and the expectations of them are high. Consequently, their attitudes to work and school are impressive. Moreover, the excellent care they receive means they can rightly say that they feel safe and secure in school. Older pupils also contribute significantly to this through the responsibilities they undertake, for example as play leaders and members of the school council. Wider contributions are evident in the local community and much further afield through financial support for charities and links with a school in South America. The excellent curriculum provides pupils with impressive guidance about the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle, often in subjects such as science. Throughout the school, pupils were eating fruit and participating in the vigorous 'Wake up, shake up' sessions.

Overall, pupils' academic achievement is outstanding, including that of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Children arrive in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception) with below average skills and abilities. They make excellent progress and start Year 1 with at least average standards. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are most often significantly above the national average. Currently, pupils' work reflects the same high standards achieved in past national test results. Leaders and managers are very rigorous in checking pupils' progress, so that if any pupil is not making the expected progress the appropriate challenge and support is introduced. Consequently, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make significant progress. The proportion of pupils at the end of each key stage who achieve at the higher levels exceeds the national average. In recent years, the main focus has been on raising standards in science and mathematics and there has been very good improvement in both subjects. Currently, writing is under the spotlight. The school's own data and inspection evidence show substantial improvements in the quality of writing and very good progress made by pupils as a result. The written work in pupils' books is also showing improvement and pupils are on track to meet their challenging targets. Pupils are very well prepared for their future schooling and life in general.

Pupils make excellent gains in their learning because of highly effective teaching, guidance and support. Pupils are rigorously challenged and supported. Teaching assistants provide well-timed and sensitive guidance for pupils who need it, which helps these pupils to keep up with the others. The excellent relationships ensure that pupils are willing to ask questions and admit if they are finding the work difficult. Teachers skilfully ask questions that stretch pupils of differing ability and also expose any misunderstandings. Classroom management is excellent

and, consequently, pupils' learning is very rarely interrupted. Teachers work hard and very successfully to ensure that pupils see the relevance of their learning. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson about three-dimensional shapes, the initial identification was based on structures projected onto the interactive whiteboard. Pupils were then asked to identify the shapes of everyday articles, such as washing powder boxes. Pupils are given individual targets based on them making at least good progress. There were some very good examples of this being done successfully. Pupils knew what their targets were and how teachers' marking tells them how well they are doing. Just occasionally, target-setting and marking are not as effective and, consequently, some pupils are not as clear as they might be of their achievements and what they should do next. The school is aware of this and has strategies in place that are improving the situation.

The curriculum promotes high academic and personal achievement. Pupils benefit from the wide range of enrichment activities that include visits, visitors, after-school clubs and collaborative work with other schools. These collaborations include the development of modern foreign languages with a local secondary school, joint initiatives with the neighbouring cluster of schools and the work of specialists in areas such as sport and the arts. Music and art play a significant role in the school and the quality of pupils' singing was inspirational. Adaptations to the curriculum are also highly effective in ensuring that pupils with extra learning needs are stretched, including the gifted and talented. This outstanding practice indicates the school's excellent promotion of equal opportunities.

Leadership and management are excellent. There is no complacency in the school and key staff provide the inspirational headteacher with very good support. Excellent arrangements are in place to ensure that all pupils benefit equally from what the school offers. Care procedures, such as those for safeguarding and child protection, meet government requirements. Monitoring of behaviour and attendance is robust and leads to high standards. Community cohesion is good. Links with, and support for, the local community are very effective. Lessons in geography, religious education and French provide information and insights into communities further afield and there are some interesting global links developing. This reflects the school's good celebration of cultural diversity. Governance is outstanding. Governors have developed an effective and balanced approach to supporting and challenging the school, for example through the work of committees and sensitive checks on the day-to-day work of the school. They have a realistic view of the school's qualities. The combination of a very good 'track record' of improvement and rigorous leadership shows excellent capacity for further development.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make excellent progress in the Reception class because care, teaching and support are outstanding. Progress is particularly strong in communication, mathematical and social development. Children settle very quickly because induction procedures and practices are exemplary and parents are fully involved. Staff are skilled at observing children's behaviour and achievements and they closely check children's academic and personal progress. Children's individual learning diaries are continually expanded. As a result, staff have an accurate picture of how well individual children are doing and what they need to do next. A particular strength is the way in which parents are encouraged to contribute to the diaries when their children are learning at home. Children are busy and happy because there is a very good balance of activities, whether instigated by the child or a member of staff. Resources are deployed very well to ensure that there is a natural movement between indoor and outdoor activities. Welfare requirements

are fully met. Staff acknowledge that children's interests are paramount and the flexible approach to planning capitalises on this. For example, boys' writing was encouraged through working with 'Aliens love underpants' and children brought articles in to develop their 'Under the sea' topic. Leadership and management are outstanding with particular strengths in communicating with parents, ensuring a safe and secure environment and developing excellent links with feeder pre-school settings and Year 1 staff.

What the school should do to improve further

This is a high-performing school which rigorously questions its performance and takes prompt and highly effective action to tackle any issues. As it has no significant weaknesses there are no specific areas for improvement.

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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	1
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?	2
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 other inspector and I thoroughly enjoyed being in your outstanding school recently and relished the opportunity to witness the happy and purposeful atmosphere. We are very grateful for your warm welcome, courtesy and the help you provided. Here are some of the important things we found out:

- children's work and achievement in the Reception class is excellent
- you achieve consistently high standards at the end of Year 6 as a result of the excellent progress you make through the school
- you provide superb support for each other in classes and outdoors and you all contribute greatly to the secure and caring atmosphere in the school
- the school helps you prepare for the future extremely well, by encouraging the very close relationships you develop, your outstanding behaviour and your first-rate attitudes to work
- you are given excellent opportunities to 'shine' in music and art and there is a very interesting range of activities available to you
- the excellent teaching of all the staff puts your needs first
- the way in which the school is run, including the contribution you make through the school council, is outstanding.

As your school is doing so well, and is constantly looking to do even better, we feel there are no key areas for improvement. Staff know where any minor weaknesses are and have clear plans in place to tackle them.

Good luck for the future and continue to look after each other.