

St Luke's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111379
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	325366
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Terence Bond

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)	189
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 C Droogan
Headteacher	Mrs M Coleman
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Willows Frodsham Cheshire WA6 7QP
Telephone number	01928 731721
Fax number	01928 731721

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This small primary school is situated in the town of Frodsham in Cheshire and serves a wide catchment area. The majority come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are a very small percentage of pupils whose first language is not English. The school has been awarded Healthy Schools status and the Sportsmark for its health and sports promotion. It has also received the Fairtrade Mark and Silver Eco Award. There is provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the pre-school setting. Before-and after-school and holiday care facilities are also available on site. These settings did not form part of this inspection and the inspection reports may be found on the Ofsted website.

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, providing excellent value for money. The dedication and commitment of the headteacher, staff and governors, are key factors in helping to ensure that the school is a happy, welcoming and successful place in which to learn. Pupils' achievement in their personal development and their academic studies is exceptional. These outcomes are the result of outstanding teaching and a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils extremely well. Behaviour is outstanding and pupils show a real enthusiasm for learning. They feel safe and care well for one another. Pupils have a clear awareness of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle which is acknowledged by the award of Healthy Schools status. The overwhelming majority of parents strongly support the school. A representative view is, 'St Luke's is a happy, caring school', where, 'staff are committed to the education and welfare of all the children'.

Pupils join the Reception with skills that are typical for their age. By the end of Year 6, standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science. This has been the case for the past five years, although there was a slight dip in 2007. Prompt action taken by the school, resulted in the percentage of pupils attaining Level 4 and Level 5 in 2008, in all these subjects, being the best the school has ever achieved. Teachers make very good use of a range of techniques to ensure that all pupils are involved in their learning, including assessing their own progress. This means that pupils have a good understanding of how to improve their work. This is particularly effective because the work they are set is so closely matched to their abilities. Excellent relationships in all classes mean that pupils feel valued and well supported. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve extremely well as a result of the focused support they receive.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. Pupils talk confidently about how much they enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their high level of attendance. The school provides numerous opportunities for pupils to become independent and exercise responsibility, for example, as school councillors or playground buddies. They show very good community awareness, working to improve the school environment and supporting charity fundraising activities locally, nationally and internationally. A first-rate curriculum includes a superb range of sporting, musical and creative experiences and very many educational visits. All these opportunities increase pupils' enjoyment of school and enrich their learning. Pupils' well above average skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) prepare them exceptionally well for their future economic well-being.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher and senior management team provide a clear direction for the school, which all staff strongly support. Governors have an excellent understanding of the school and provide effective support and challenge. This is a significant factor in the school's excellent capacity to bring about further improvement. The school's outstanding contribution to community cohesion is evident in its support for parents, the parish and through its national and international links. The school promotes equality of opportunity and diversity well by ensuring effective support for all pupils.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides outstanding education for all the children. They start in Reception with skills that are typical for their age. They make significant gains in their development because of the excellent learning opportunities provided for them both inside and outdoors. As a result, they grow in confidence and self-esteem and by the end of Reception, a good proportion are exceeding the levels expected of their age.

There is a very good balance between tasks the children choose for themselves and those led by adults. Children show exceptionally high levels of independence, curiosity and concentration when faced with challenging tasks, for example, during the mini-beast hunt in the school grounds in their search and identification of insects and small creatures. Children's personal development is carefully nurtured. They are happy and feel safe and secure. The children know how to share and get on very well with one another. They behave extremely well and take great delight in showing their work to adults. Information from observations and assessments are used effectively to provide a wide range of activities that are very well matched to children's needs. Strong links with the pre-school and external providers further support this excellent provision. Parents are actively encouraged to become more involved in their children's learning and this, too, has a significant impact on children's learning and development. The Early Years Foundation Stage is exceptionally well led and managed and teamwork is very strong. Staff constantly review their practice and look for ways to improve the provision still further.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant areas for improvement which the school has not already identified.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement and standards are outstanding. In Years 1 and 2, pupils build very well upon the skills acquired in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in reading. By the end of Year 2, standards are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This is due to the very effective teaching and continued emphasis on developing pupils' communication and language skills, which enables them to make very good academic progress. This rate of progress continues throughout Key Stage 2. Apart from a slight dip in 2007, standards by the end of Year 6 have been consistently high in recent years. Inspection evidence and school data indicate that, currently, standards are well above average, with a higher proportion of pupils attaining Level 4 and, in particular, the more able pupils achieving Level 5. This represents the highest level of standards that the school has ever achieved. Standards in English are slightly stronger than in mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress in relation to their specific needs and starting points and they achieve exceptionally well. This is because support from teaching assistants, together with work that is closely matched to their ability, promotes their learning very well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are very welcoming and friendly and show a great sense of pride in their school. They have a very good idea of what is right and wrong and genuinely care for one another. They are fully aware of the harmful effects of bullying and racism. Pupils have a well developed sense

of belonging to one community and have forged positive relationships with pupils from other cultural backgrounds through their links with schools in the United States and Singapore. They show great awareness of the needs of others, which is demonstrated by their generous fundraising activities, such as in their support for a child in Haiti. Pupils contribute very effectively to the decision-making process within the school, for example, through the role of the school council which was responsible for buying small play equipment. Pupils' enjoyment of school life is reflected in their high levels of attendance. They express their thoughts and opinions politely and articulately. Pupils are well aware of the importance of being healthy. The popularity of the healthy choices in the canteen shows this, as does the excellent uptake of sports and other activities. Pupils show high levels of concern for the health and safety of one another and respect each other's individual feelings.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Management of lessons is effective and there is a wide range of outstanding opportunities for pupils to work independently, as well as collaboratively. Teachers also ensure that pupils understand the purpose of each lesson and what they need to do, so that they have successfully achieved it. Teachers use questioning effectively to encourage pupils to think and justify their answers. Lessons are well planned, with a variety of interesting and challenging activities, which enable pupils to build on previous learning and this has a positive effect on their overall progress. Teachers explain new ideas very clearly, using, for instance, interactive whiteboards so that pupils can understand and apply these ideas for themselves. Good speech and appropriate language are demonstrated exceptionally well in all classes and this has a significant impact on developing pupils' personal and literacy skills. The pace of lessons is lively and humour is used to good effect. The needs of pupils of all abilities are catered for by providing work, which is appropriate to them. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This enables these pupils to participate confidently in lessons and to complete tasks successfully. Teachers give pupils regular feedback on their progress and how they can improve further, by discussing their work with them or by including helpful comments when marking.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is stimulating and very carefully organised to suit the learning, physical and emotional needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as well as those with particular gifts or talents. This allows pupils to achieve exceptionally well both academically and in their personal development. Cross-curricular links are well established and provide many opportunities for the children to undertake interesting projects, such as a local history topic on Frodsham, in Year 4. ICT is promoted well. Links with other schools, nationally and internationally, are managed through the innovative school internet portal. This provides an exciting additional dimension to the curriculum. There is a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, including cookery, gardening and sports clubs. Music and creativity are strengths throughout the school. The impact of a strong and very effective focus on personal, social, health and citizenship education is seen in confident and polite pupils who are able to contribute to class discussions articulately. The use of visits and visitors, such as through science workshops and the Life Education Programme, enliven the curriculum and stimulate pupils'

interest in learning more about the world in which they live. The opportunity to learn French, throughout the school, is greatly enjoyed by the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided by the school are exceptional and make a significant contribution to pupils' social and emotional well-being. Parents are very appreciative of this and typically comment that the school provides, 'a lovely, caring environment'. Adults know pupils very well and this does much to ensure that each pupil is safe, happy and well motivated to learn. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent, as exemplified by the wide range of support strategies, aimed at developing their confidence and self-esteem. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and reviewed regularly. They meet current government guidelines.

Pupils' marking and assessment of their own work is exemplary and helps them to become more secure in their understanding of how they can improve. Targets are challenging and specific to the individual needs of pupils. Pupils' progress is tracked and monitored effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school is exceptionally well led and managed and provides excellent value for money. The headteacher has a clear vision for the future which is shared by all those who are associated with the school. Together with the extremely capable senior management team and the very effective governing body, staff have an accurate picture of the school's performance and what needs to be done to secure further improvement. Equality of opportunity is actively promoted and discrimination eliminated because the school ensures that all groups of pupils benefit from the wide range of opportunities open to them. All leaders and managers have an excellent knowledge of pupils' progress because tracking systems are robust. Very good use is made of challenging targets to raise standards. When concerns are highlighted; prompt and effective action is taken to address them. The school's outstanding contribution to community cohesion is evident in its support for parents, the parish and in its national and international links. This has had a significant impact upon pupils' understanding of those outside the school community. Governors make an impressive contribution to the self-evaluation process by asking challenging questions when setting priorities for future development. This is another strong feature of the school's excellent capacity to improve even further.

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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	1
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**

Inspection of St Lukes Catholic Primary School, Frodsham, WA6 7QP

Thank you for your friendly welcome to me and my colleague. I enjoyed finding out how much you enjoy learning, and listening to what you thought about your school. Your school gives you an outstanding education.

Children get a great start in the Reception class and have so many opportunities to learn with each other through play. You continue to make excellent progress in all other years and, by the time you leave at the end of Year 6, you reach well above average standards in English, mathematics and science. This is because the teaching you receive is excellent and you work very hard.

Your behaviour is outstanding and you look after each other extremely well. We were very impressed with the work of the school council and how proud you are of the responsibilities you have in school. It is quite clear you thoroughly enjoy your lessons and that you get a great deal out of attending the many interesting after-school clubs and visits. Your teachers and teaching assistants take great care of you. They make sure that everyone feels safe and secure. They also give you a lot of very good advice about how you can improve your work.

Your headteacher and governors know the school extremely well and have thought of all the ways to make your school even better. You can help by continuing to work hard and making the most of your time at St Luke's.