

St Theresa's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111388
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	325369
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Mrs Kathleen McArthur

The inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr B Larkin
Headteacher	Mrs N Kirkman
Date of previous school inspection	April 2006
School address	Kipling Road Blacon Chester CH1 5UU
Telephone number	01244 981070
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, observed lessons, scrutinised pupils' books and a range of school documentation, including the strategic school development plan and local authority reports, and analysed 42 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of pupils' learning and progress
- systems to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in school self-evaluation
- how well the curriculum meets the needs of all groups of learners.

Information about the school

This is an average sized Catholic primary school, serving a large estate on the outskirts of the city. Nearly all the pupils are from White British backgrounds, but there is an increasing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language, mainly from Eastern Europe. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little below average, but the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is above average. The Early Years Foundation Stage operates as a single unit, providing a Nursery class and a Reception class. There has been considerable staff turnover since the previous inspection including the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher.

The school holds a Basic Skills Quality Mark, National Healthy Schools Award, Activemark and Extended schools Award.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Theresa's is a good, inclusive school that welcomes pupils from all faiths and cultural backgrounds. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive because their children are happy and progress well. Rising numbers on roll show that the school is well regarded in the local community. There is a real sense of pride in the school and leadership has a genuine commitment to further develop all aspects of provision for the benefit of each pupil.

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with a good start. Pupils achieve well throughout the school so that by the time they leave school in Year 6, attainment is just above the national average. Pupils' progress is carefully checked so that they do not fall behind. The quality of teaching is now good overall, but some inconsistencies remain. Well planned lessons make good use of assessment information and ensure pupils build on previous learning and are given work that mostly challenges them to do their best. However, work does not always challenge the more able pupils and the particularly good, strong quality of teaching seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 4 and Year 6 is not consistently available in all classes.

Outstanding care, support and guidance ensure pupils are very happy, know how to be healthy, feel safe, really enjoy school and confidently make full use of all opportunities presented to them. The school has good procedures to deal with any unacceptable behaviour and pupils say bullying is not a problem. Very good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to progress well. Pupils behave well, are polite and helpful to others and show respect to staff and visitors: they hold doors open and willingly carry out their responsibilities. The well balanced and enriched curriculum provides lessons and activities that capture pupils' interest effectively and is suitably adapted so all groups of learners' progress well.

The relatively new senior leadership team has a firmly established and clear vision for improvement which is supported by staff and governors. Effective school self-evaluation enables leaders to identify strengths and areas needing improvement and implement rigorous action plans. The senior leadership has ensured that the role of middle managers is rapidly improving but, as yet, subject leaders have not fully developed their roles to contribute to school improvement. Actions for improvement are already having an effect, for example, standards are improving and progress is now good and there has been a big improvement in attendance. Consequently, capacity for further improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make the existing good practice in teaching consistently available to all pupils by:
 - ensuring work is more closely matched to individual pupils abilities, in particular by increasing the challenge for the more able pupils
 - making greater use of the schools' staff development and training systems to share and develop best practice in all classes.
- Extend the role of subject leaders by:
 - sharpening their roles in monitoring and increase their impact on the drive to raise standards
 - making more effective use of monitoring information to inform school self-evaluation.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well and their good attitudes in lessons show how much they enjoy learning. They told inspectors how much they like school. They work hard, listen carefully, behave well and cooperate happily, for example, when discussing adjectives and adverbs with their 'elbow partners'. They are praised for their efforts so they really want to do well and reach their next target, and consequently make good progress in lessons. Evidence of good progress was also seen in pupils' books.

Standards at the end of Year 6, as shown by national test results in English, mathematics and science, have been consistently above average during the period since the last inspection, but dipped to average in 2008: this lower achieving cohort was also affected by unavoidable staffing disruption. The school provided well targeted additional support for these pupils and data shows they made good progress in relation to their individual starting points and many exceeded their targets. The school has secure assessment data to show the current Year 6 is on track to match previous above average levels in English, mathematics and science. All pupils are on track to reach the nationally expected Level 4 in science, and almost half to reach the higher Level 5. Pupils say they enjoy science lessons and say that they learn best through practical investigations. Actions to improve writing across the school have proved successful. Data shows writing outcomes now almost match reading at Year 6 and are on track to be just above average.

Standards at the end of Year 2 have risen and reached nationally expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics in 2008. Pupils' achievement in writing was especially strong. School assessment data show that current standards in Year 2 are broadly average, showing good progress from these pupils' individual starting points.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. The school provides well for their particular needs through carefully targeted support and focused sessions provided by skilled, well deployed teaching assistants. The small number of pupils learning to speak English as an additional language also receives high quality support so they also make good and sometimes outstanding progress.

The learning mentor makes a valuable and sensitive contribution in supporting pupils whose emotional needs or problems may otherwise affect their progress and well-being.

Pupils' spiritual development is good, seen in quiet, respectful attitudes during worship, and in their enjoyment of life and learning. They have a keen moral sense and show high levels of care and concern for others and for the environment. Pupils know the importance of regular exercise and a healthy diet. Cultural development is promoted well. Pupils learn of other faiths and cultures through curriculum studies and the local partnership multi-faith week. The school provides a range of experiences pupils might not otherwise meet, for example, learning to play a musical instrument and performing in a schools concert at the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester.

Considerable efforts by the school have raised attendance levels to above average and there are very few persistent absentees, showing that pupils and families realise the importance of regular attendance on the pupils' progress and future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

How effective is the provision?

Some examples of particularly high quality teaching were observed and good practice was found across the school, but this is not yet fully consistent in all classes. Pupils speak highly of the staff: 'They teach us really well and keep us safe.' was a typical comment. Most lessons are well planned and make good use of all resources including information and communication technology (ICT). Lessons build on what pupils have already learned and move along at a lively pace, keeping pupils on their toes and eager for their next steps in learning. Strong, supportive relationships feature in all classes. Pupils behave well and staff manage behaviour skilfully so lessons run smoothly and learning is not disrupted. Well informed support staff make a valuable contribution, particularly for pupils who need extra help or who are at an early stage of learning to speak English. However, teachers do not always match

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

work effectively to pupils' different abilities, this is especially so for the more able pupils who are not always fully challenged.

Good assessment procedures give a very clear picture of how well individual pupils are progressing. The information enables staff to plan work that meets the needs of learners and directs extra help when needed. Most teachers provide comments either orally or through marking so their pupils know how to improve their work, and the pupils are encouraged to actively respond to their teachers' written comments. Pupils know their targets and are keen to reach them and move on to their next target.

The curriculum successfully meets the needs of pupils through interesting activities and targeted support. Consequently, pupils are keen to learn and enjoy their work. Staff know that pupils learn best through practical activities and are currently reviewing and developing the curriculum, to create imaginative links between subjects while covering essential skills. Year 4 pupils particularly enjoyed a topic based on chocolate. This included literacy, art, calculation and geography, and the pupils were eagerly anticipating their visit to a chocolate factory. Specialist teaching in French, music and physical education along with partnerships with local schools really enrich the curriculum. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their residential visits. The variety of after-school clubs provides for a wide range of interests. Gifted and talented pupils, attending an ICT club, are learning skills that they will use to help their teachers create a learning platform that pupils and parents can access.

Outstanding high quality care in the welcoming environment ensures all pupils feel secure, happy and progress well. Pupils are very confident about where to seek help and know their concerns will be listened to. Staff know pupils and their families well. These very good relationships, together with strong links with external support agencies, further support pupils' learning and well-being, especially the most vulnerable. Very good provision for pupils learning English as an additional language, and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ensures they are fully included in all activities and make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. Pupils confidently move on to their next stage of education, well supported by very effective transition arrangements.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and the deputy headteacher are relatively new to their posts but have quickly established themselves as a strong, effective leadership team. They are very committed to driving improvement and have successfully gained the support of staff and governors, ensuring they share their ambitious vision for the school. Senior leaders and governors managed the extended period of staffing disruption well, so that pupils continued to make good progress, and issues from the previous inspection have been successfully overcome. The leadership has implemented good

systems that have successfully improved the overall quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. This has been particularly effective in writing where standards have risen. Good support from senior leaders, together with well targeted professional training, is helping newly appointed middle leaders develop their roles. However, they do not yet gather sufficient information about standards and provision in their subjects, to enable them to contribute fully to school self-evaluation.

Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching accurately and track pupil progress rigorously, using this information to set realistic yet challenging targets. There is strong evidence of good practice in teaching throughout the school but leadership has yet to fully exploit this to ensure good teaching is consistently available to all pupils.

The school is fully inclusive and successfully ensures all pupils have equal opportunities to access all activities. Arrangements for pupils' safeguarding are good and meet all government requirements. The needs of all pupils are carefully assessed so additional support can be directed to those with additional needs or who are particularly vulnerable. Good partnerships with local schools enable staff to share good practice and develop initiatives that significantly enhance pupils' education and experiences.

Governance is satisfactory. The well led governing body took difficult decisions to delay appointments until they found the right headteacher and deputy headteacher. They bring strong links with the parish and local community but are not yet fully involved in monitoring the quality of provision to contribute to school self-evaluation.

Arrangements for community cohesion are good. Leadership has analysed the school's context well, and implemented good provision, creating a harmonious learning community that reaches out to meet the needs of parents and the wider local community: for example, 'Family Fridays' and family learning courses.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage gives children a good start to their school life. When children enter the Nursery, their skills are well below the levels expected of children of their age, especially in their language, communication and personal and social development. Good leadership promotes strong staff teamwork and ensures

children and their parents meet a welcoming, secure environment. High quality care and support help children settle quickly and gain in confidence, so they arrive each day eager to explore all the activities on offer. They make good progress in all areas of learning and their skills are just below the levels expected by the end of their Reception Year, although their language skills still lag behind. Teaching is good throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, with a strong focus on developing language and social skills. Every day, children experience a well balanced blend of activities they choose for themselves and activities led by staff. There is a busy, happy atmosphere as children go about their tasks, both inside the classroom and in the spacious outdoor area. Behaviour is good and children happily share and learn to be responsible, quickly tidying away the equipment when they hear the bell. Staff track and record each child's progress rigorously and make good use of the information when planning the next steps in learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage operates as a single unit and children confidently move between the well-equipped rooms and outdoor areas. This means Nursery children know the staff and feel at home in the Reception classroom so they transfer confidently. Staff know the children well and use every opportunity to meet their individual needs. For example, the more able Nursery children may work with Reception children in the short daily phonics sessions. Parents are welcomed as partners and encouraged to join in their child's learning through 'family mornings' and 'stretch and grow' sessions.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents expressed overwhelming support for the school, in the parental questionnaires. They are pleased that their children are happy, well cared for and making good progress in the supportive friendly environment. They commented particularly favourably on the headteacher and staff, describing them as dedicated, hardworking and approachable and, 'Always doing their best for the children.' Some concerns were expressed about the rate of staff turnover although the inspection found that leadership has made every effort to overcome this.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Theresa's Catholic Primary school to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 42 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 213 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	10	0	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



17 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Theresa's Catholic Primary School, Chester, CH1 5UU

On behalf of the inspection team, I am writing to thank you for the warm and friendly welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school. You were a credit to your parents, families and teachers, and we were very impressed by your good behaviour, manners and politeness. Thank you for giving up your time to tell us how much you enjoy school, going on visits, having lots of friends and how you particularly enjoy all the after-school clubs.

We judge St Theresa's to be a good school. The Early Years Foundation Stage gives you a good start. You make good progress, work hard to reach your targets and standards are usually above those in most schools when you leave Year 6. We have asked the staff to make sure the more able children are always really challenged by their work. Staff care for you all exceptionally well so you are safe and feel secure and think the rules are fair. You say the staff teach you well, and we agree. We saw lots of good things happening in most classes and we think staff could share ideas better so you are always taught well. The curriculum is good and gives you all sorts of extra opportunities, including learning a musical instrument and performing in concerts, and we know you really enjoy the residential visits to Burwardsley and Beeston.

The school has good leaders and managers who work hard to make your school even better. Another thing we have asked the school to do is make sure that those teachers who have responsibility for different subjects check standards and use the information to help the leaders in their work to improve the school.

We are sure you will continue to work hard and help the staff. We wish you well and hope you continue to enjoy everything you do at St Theresa's School.

We send our very best wishes to you all

Kathleen McArthur
Lead inspector

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