

St Edmund's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119592
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327081
Inspection dates	12–13 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Geoffrey Yates

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	137
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 Frances Hopkins
Headteacher	Mr David Ashley
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Windrows New Church Farm Skelmersdale Lancashire WN8 8NP

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	12–13 February 2009
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Telephone number
Fax number

01695 724798
01695 724798

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school situated in the centre of Skelmersdale. Most pupils are of White British heritage. An above average proportion of the pupils are eligible to receive free school meals. The percentage identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also above average. The school's population includes a small number of Traveller children. The school has achieved many awards including the Healthy School award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils achieve well. The school successfully nurtures an ethos of self-respect and respect for others, and this is central to its happy and effective learning community. Pupils' good achievement is the result of good quality teaching, a curriculum that interests and engages them and excellent pastoral care that helps them grow in confidence. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. With the good support of his staff, no stone is left unturned in ensuring pupils' personal development is of an outstanding quality. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and is underpinned by increasingly rigorous assessment and review. Many parents commented on friendly and approachable staff that are always on hand to deal with problems and anxieties. One parent's comment sums up the views of many: 'Saint Edmunds is a well run, caring, community-orientated school.' Some exemplary work is done in ensuring that traveller pupils not only attend school on a regular basis, but take a full part in all aspects of school life, reflecting the school's total commitment to inclusion.

Pupils' achievement is good and standards are broadly average. Despite the good start they receive in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils enter Year 1 with below average skills. They make good progress and the school has convincing evidence to show that current standards by the end of Year 6 are average. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 dipped in 2008, mainly because of staff absence and the large percentage of pupils with learning difficulties in the age group. While progress in developing basic numeracy skills is good pupils do not apply their skills well when attempting to solve mathematical problems.

Pupils feel they are listened to and cared for very well in school. Their outstandingly good behaviour and their very positive attitudes to learning demonstrate the effectiveness of the school's provision of care. The school meets national guidelines with regard to child protection issues. The strong emphasis on praise and valuing each individual ensures pupils grow in self-esteem and form good quality relationships with staff and with each other. Pupils are highly knowledgeable about healthy lifestyle issues and they are encouraged to eat and drink healthily. They understand the importance of keeping themselves safe. Older pupils show very caring attitudes to the younger children, for example, at playtimes, when playground pals and playground leaders ensure pupils play together happily and enjoy each others' company. Most pupils attend well reflecting their enjoyment of school and the school's positive relationships with parents and families; however, attendance levels are satisfactory overall. It is impressive that, without prompting, pupils of all ages can tell you the government's attendance percentage target! Pupils' good achievements, their very good attitudes to one another, their very good sense of right from wrong, and good knowledge of the world outside school prepare them well for the future.

Teaching and learning are good. All members of staff have very good relationships with pupils and classes are managed well. Teaching assistants and the learning mentor provide very good support. Lessons are made interesting by, for example, the good use made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support pupils' learning. However, when marking pupils' work, teachers miss opportunities to provide comments to help pupils improve the quality of what they have produced. The curriculum is good. There is a good emphasis on developing basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics but not enough on pupils applying their numeracy skills. Good systems have been put in place to track pupils' progress with the resultant information having a positive impact on their achievement.

Leadership and management are good. The well respected headteacher receives very good support from staff and governors. Subject leaders carry out their duties well and are becoming increasingly involved in evaluating their subject areas. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. The needs of the local community are well understood and addressed, and the school is increasing pupils' understanding of the diversity of Great Britain and the wider world. Governors are very active and are very aware of the school's strengths and possible areas for development. Self-evaluation is accurate. The school has a good capacity to improve because of the clear direction by the headteacher, the willingness of staff to embrace change, and the continuing good progress pupils make. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good leadership, effective teamwork and good understanding of how young children learn help to create a stimulating environment in which children of all abilities make good progress. Children start school with skills well below those typical for the age group. The children settle quickly into their new surroundings and make good progress in learning especially in relation to their personal development. Early counting and reading skills are taught well and reinforced both in the classroom and in the outside area. For example, one child was asked to find seven word cards scattered around the outside area. The teacher then hid the cards in the sand tray. The child then searched for the cards and when one was found 'sounded out' correctly the word for the teacher. Learning activities such as these are stimulating and well managed. However, occasionally there is not a good balance achieved between those that are led by adults and activities chosen and directed by the children themselves. The staff provide an abundance of outdoor learning opportunities. For example, a lesson plan was changed when the teacher realised that ice had been formed on top of the water tray in the outside area to enable children to touch, feel and then talk about what they experienced. Teaching is good which enables children to progress well. However, because of their low starting point children leave the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are below average. Above all, learning is fun and the welfare and care needs of the children are met outstandingly well, including those of traveller children. Very warm relationships, a well planned curriculum, very good links with parents all enable children's education to get off to a good start.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more challenging opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in solving problems.
- Improve the quality and consistency of marking to ensure that pupils are given clear guidance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science by Year 6. This represents good achievement from a below average start in Year 1. By the end of Year 2, standards have been variable in previous years but not less than average. School data indicates that, this year, standards remain average in reading, writing and mathematics.

In 2008, the Year 6 results dipped to below average, but were adversely affected by staff absence and the high percentage of pupils in the small year group with learning difficulties. Girls achieved very well. However, the standards attained by boys were lower, especially in writing, representing satisfactory progress from their lower starting points. In addition, pupils

generally are not skilled enough at solving problems in mathematics. The school's reliable statistics predict average results for the current Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from close support which ensures good achievement. Traveller pupils also achieve well compared with their low starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal qualities reflect exceptional support for their excellent spiritual, moral and social development. Their cultural understanding is not quite as strong. Respect and consideration for others are central to the work of the school and lead to outstanding behaviour and caring pupils who get on very well with each other. Pupils show their enjoyment for school in their eagerness to get on with the day. For example, high numbers of pupils come in before school to take part in 'Wake up and shake up.' Take up of other out of school activities is also very good. While most pupils attend school well, attendance fluctuates and is broadly average overall. Pupils appreciate fully the importance of healthy lifestyles and their efforts are recognised by the Healthy School award and Activemark award for sport. Pupils learn about possible dangers; as one pupil said, 'We feel safe because there are grown-ups like our learning mentor to help us and listen to us.' Membership of the school council, fulfilling a range of duties and a willingness to raise funds for charity are just some examples of the outstanding way pupils learn about their role in the community. The school council members and hospitality leaders say they feel proud to have been given these roles. Very good links with the local community include pupils being able to question magistrates about their duties. All pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

All members of staff have very good relationships with pupils, which enables learning to proceed at a good pace. As a result, teaching and learning are good with examples of outstanding practice. Teachers are clear about learning outcomes. There are good challenges, work is well matched to pupils' learning needs and motivates pupils in their learning. For example, older pupils are keen to talk about how they can make their writing more interesting. Teaching assistants support teachers very well. All members of staff use praise and rewards very effectively. Key Stage 1 pupils benefit greatly by being taught literacy and numeracy in separate age groups in the mornings. Tasks are explained clearly, enabling children to settle quickly to their work. However, at times, work is not challenging enough for the higher attainers in the use they make of their numeracy skills. Good use is made of ICT across the school. There are some good examples of teachers using marking to provide pointers for improvement but this is not yet consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is a very strong feature of the curriculum. As a result, pupils enjoy school and know their ideas will be listened to. The excellent range of after school clubs is much enjoyed by pupils. Good attention is paid to developing

basic skills although opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mental arithmetic skills are limited. Good use is made of ICT skills across the school. Subjects such as history and geography are taught separately and this places some limitations on pupils' opportunities to transfer their skills from one area of learning to another. The leadership team rightly feel that it is time to review the curriculum in order to establish more effective links between subjects to help pupils to connect aspects of their learning more coherently. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn a foreign language. Visitors to the school and visits to local places of historical and geographical interest all significantly support and enrich pupils' learning and enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pastoral care is very strong. Parents are highly supportive of the school and have plenty of opportunities to become involved. They appreciate the support given by the school with day-to-day concerns and the excellent care provided for their children. Every step is taken to ensure pupils feel valued and respected as individuals and know there is always someone to talk over any worries they might have. The learning mentor is a key member of staff and supports pupils outstandingly well. All

systems for safeguarding pupils' health, safety and well-being are in place and meet requirements. Teachers and teaching assistants provide very good support to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the more vulnerable pupils and the small number of traveller pupils. In order to ensure the good attendance of traveller pupils, they are collected and taken home daily by a member of staff. Not only that, before they go home they are given time to complete their homework. This excellent initiative ensures that these pupils are fully included in all that the school has to offer and that they make the same progress as their classmates. Academic guidance is good. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and extra support given where needed. The school is always on the look out for ways to improve its systems and the use made of the information gathered.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The well respected and highly experienced headteacher provides excellent leadership. He has a clear vision centred not only on improvement in performance but also on ensuring the highest possible quality of care for the pupils. The deputy headteacher provides very good support. Subject leaders are increasingly involved in leading their subject areas. The work done with regard to links with the traveller community is outstanding. The school buildings and grounds provide an excellent learning environment. In this small school, staff have many additional responsibilities and they carry them out well. The school accurately evaluates its work, identifying appropriate areas for action because of the good systems that are in place. Governors are well involved in the life and work of the school and have a good understanding of its performance. However, at times they are over-reliant on the headteacher. The school has excellent links with parents who are encouraged to take a full part in their children's learning and pupils are consulted about their views. Parents are unanimous in their praise for the school. They see the school not only as an asset to the community but, since the closure of the parish church, as a centre for the community. As such, the school's contribution to community cohesion is good. The needs of the local community are understood by the school and met by providing social

events and other activities that bring the community together. Overall, the school has made good improvements since the previous inspection.

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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?	2
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	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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	3
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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**

15 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Edmund's Catholic Primary School, Lancashire, WN8 8NP

I really enjoyed my visit to your school. Thank you for making me so welcome. I was pleased to see that you care about your school and the people in it and that you are very polite and courteous. I was very impressed by the way in which you talked confidently about your school because this helped me with the inspection. For example, I learned that you feel safe and secure in school and that teachers are very friendly and give you interesting things to do so that you work hard and enjoy coming to school. I really enjoyed looking and listening to the school's video diary.

These are some of the things that your school does well.

- You benefit from good teaching because your teachers work hard to make lessons interesting so that you make good progress.
- The school looks after you extremely well and makes sure that each one of you is valued.
- Your headteacher leads the school outstandingly well and all the staff and governors work hard to improve the school.

Here are some of the things that I think could be better.

- When teachers mark your work they should consider making more comments that help you improve your work further.
- The school should provide more opportunities for you to use your mental arithmetic skills to solve problems.

Thank you again for your very kind welcome. I have never been in a school before where all the pupils know the government's attendance target! I am sure the Prime Minister would be delighted, especially if you all continue to try hard to meet or exceed it.

Yours faithfully

Geoffrey Yates

Lead inspector