

St Jude's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130384
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	328527
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Eileen M Mulgrew HMI

This 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)	203
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage	0
Appropriate authority	Chair of governors
Chair	Mr R Unsworth
Headteacher	Mrs J Booth
Date of previous school inspection	March 2006
School address	Worsley Mesnes Drive Worsley Mesnes Wigan WN3 5AN
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. The inspectors visited 13 lessons or part lessons, and held meetings and discussions with groups of pupils, the staff, two governors, and the school's improvement officer. They observed the school's work and analysed documentation provided by the school, such as the school development plan, safeguarding information, and records of pupils' progress and test results. The inspectors also analysed the 49 questionnaires returned by parents.

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

- attainment, progress and learning for all groups of pupils, in particular pupils in Key Stage 1 and higher attaining pupils
- the quality of teaching and learning across the school
- attainment, progress and learning in science
- the impact of leaders and managers at all levels (including governors) on improvement and the rate of improvement since the last inspection.

Information about the school

St Jude's is a slightly smaller than average primary school and most pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, although that with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below average. A very small proportion of pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The school has received the Healthy Schools award, Activemark and Green Eco Flag. It provides before and after school care which is attended by children from the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Jude's is a satisfactory school. It has some good features, especially in pupils' personal development. This is because of the good support, guidance and care provided by all the staff. The school is very effective in providing an important focus for the wider community, and the headteacher plays a pivotal role in maintaining this focus. The strong partnership that exists between the school, parents and the parish enables staff to know the pupils and their families well. Parents are supportive of the school's work; many of them attended the school themselves and were taught by the current headteacher and deputy headteacher. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school because they feel safe, secure and valued. The school welcomes pupils who may have experienced difficulties in their previous school, and helps them to settle and do as well as their classmates. However, the achievement of pupils is satisfactory because despite some teaching being good or better, teaching is not consistently so. During the inspection some unsatisfactory teaching was observed that did not engage the pupils, and hindered the progress made by them. The headteacher has been effective in tackling weaknesses in teaching but some teaching is still not effective enough.

Achievement is satisfactory overall. It is, however, uneven across the school and this is directly linked to the quality of teaching. Some instability in staffing in recent years has contributed to the variable rates of progress made by various groups of pupils. Some teaching observed during the inspection inspired pupils, and was of the highest standard. Too often, though, teaching did not fully engage the interest and concentration of all groups of pupils. Despite these difficulties, the pupils experience sufficiently strong teaching throughout the school to enable them to make satisfactory progress overall. Progress accelerates in Year 6: for the last two years pupils have attained overall above average standards in the national tests.

The headteacher and senior leaders have been active in trying to reduce the impact of staffing difficulties since the previous inspection. Recently, the effective action to appoint a new member of staff to help develop information and communication technology has had a positive impact. Links between curriculum subjects and the planned progression of skills and knowledge are at an early stage of development; as a result, there are missed opportunities to challenge higher achieving pupils further. Planned activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not challenge pupils to develop their own ideas. Teams of staff have recently been established to support the development of all areas of the curriculum, but it is too early to gauge the impact

of their work. Senior leaders have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, but current plans do not always tackle identified priorities or reflect the most pressing issues. As a result, the school has satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

Issues for improvement from the last inspection have been generally well tackled. Action to improve writing has resulted in improvements throughout the school, and evidence from a scrutiny of pupils' work in Year 2 shows attainment is rising in this subject. Information about pupils' progress is shared with teachers. Targets for pupils are set at the start of the year and reviewed after regular assessments. As a result, teachers are beginning to have a better understanding of the level of attainment and rate of progress of each pupil. However, this information is not always used consistently throughout the school to plan work for the different groups of pupils. This results in some pupils, especially higher achieving pupils, not receiving work that is sufficiently challenging and slows their rate of progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so that all groups of pupils, especially higher achieving pupils, in all classes make consistently good progress by:
 - implementing professional development to further develop teachers' skills in setting targets for pupils
 - improving marking so all pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve
 - increasing the proportion of good or better teaching to 80% by the end of 2009.
- Improve the curriculum by:
 - planning activities which link different subject areas and are based on planned progression of pupils' skills and knowledge
 - optimising the enthusiasm of the newly created curriculum teams to identify and plan activities for enriching the curriculum.
- Improve provision for the younger pupils by:
 - organising activities which allow them to develop their own curiosity both inside and outside the classroom.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

3

In the majority of lessons observed by inspectors, pupils made satisfactory progress, generally enjoyed their learning and attained standards in line with their capabilities. However, higher achieving pupils do not always make the gains of which they are capable. When teaching is good or outstanding, activities are carefully planned to

enthusiasm all groups of learners and attention is given to analysing their previous learning to ensure that it is well matched to their current learning needs. This approach has a significantly positive impact on pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as they receive work that addresses their identified learning priorities. In these lessons pupils make at least good progress. Teaching and progress are strongest for the oldest pupils as they prepare to take national tests, but too frequently inspectors noticed pupils making mostly satisfactory progress in other year groups.

Over the last three years, standards of attainment reached by pupils by the end of Key Stage 1 have fluctuated. Standards in 2007 improved to be in line with the national average but dipped in 2008, to below average overall. Although some pupils did make good progress because they joined the school with skills lower than their classmates, for many pupils their rate of progress was satisfactory. Inspection evidence directly observed by inspectors shows attainment in the current Year 2 class to be average and shows that pupils are making good progress. Unvalidated test results for pupils who left Year 6 in 2008 show that overall these pupils reached above average standards. The current rate of progress pupils make from Year 3 to Year 6 is improving and is satisfactory overall. Those in Year 4 and Year 6 do particularly well.

Pupils feel safe in St Jude's: this was supported by their replies to the pupils' questionnaires. Those interviewed were adamant there was no intimidation, harassment or bullying. One pupil stated, 'Bullying has been stamped out.' They are aware of risks and clear about procedures to help minimise them. For example, when using the school field they know the boundaries in which they can play. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as shown in their good attendance. They have good relationships with each other, know right from wrong, and show respect towards and tolerance of each other. Generally, pupils' behaviour is good around school and in lessons; although when work is dull some pupils become restless. They have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, including maintaining a healthy mind. Pupils make a good contribution to school life. Elected school councillors have introduced creative play activities at break times and are now involved in the purchase of new equipment for the playground. They have also been involved in interviewing for new staff. In the wider community, pupils raise money for charitable causes. For example, after the headteacher visited a school in India, pupils enthusiastically raised money to buy uniforms for the children of that school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	3
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

The quality of the school's work

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It ranges from outstanding to unsatisfactory and the impact on pupils' learning overall is inconsistent across the school. Most pupils make satisfactory progress during their time at the school but this masks at times some unsatisfactory teaching.

When teaching is at its best it enables pupils to make rapid gains in their learning. In these lessons:

- good subject knowledge results in the use of questions which challenge pupils to explore ideas and explain their thinking
- activities are planned to increase enjoyment and are based on a clear analysis of the differing abilities and prior learning of all groups of pupils
- challenging targets are set and support is used very effectively
- pupils assess their own learning
- marking indicates clearly what the pupil has done well and how to improve further
- pupils feel relaxed and able to share their ideas with each other and with the teacher.

A good example of a number of these features occurred in a Year 4 science lesson. Pupils were very enthusiastic, or as they said 'buzzing', as they worked collaboratively around the school to develop their understanding of forces by measuring them with force meters. A further example was observed in a Year 6 mathematics lesson about using pie charts. Pupils were asked to assess their understanding of the concept by using a 'traffic light system'. Pupils used a green label to indicate good understanding, amber to indicate that they may need to revisit it and red to indicate limited understanding. The responses were carefully considered by the teacher so that changes could be made to future lessons. It is this attention to detail that makes these lessons very successful.

In less effective lessons pupils miss making gains in their learning because of a combination of weaknesses. These include:

- teachers spending too long on the explanation to the lesson, thus reducing the time available for pupils to engage in independent or group work
- planned activities which are not based sufficiently well on pupils' prior learning
- some groups of pupils spending too long on low-level tasks such as colouring, which fail to challenge their thinking and improve their learning, which is especially the case for higher achieving pupils
- pupils being unfamiliar with their learning targets and receiving insufficient

guidance.

Despite some teachers not building upon pupils' prior knowledge to plan successful and challenging lessons, the school has improved the tracking of pupils' progress using school-based and national test data. In all classes, pupils' work is appraised in reading, writing, mathematics and science by teachers each half term. Senior leaders use this information well to identify pupils who may not be making the expected rate of progress so that additional support can be deployed. A recent decision to allocate these resources to some higher achieving pupils is boosting the progress they are making. Challenging targets for academic improvement are set and progress towards these targets is more closely monitored than at the time of the last inspection. However, the system is not used consistently by all teachers.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and supports pupils' satisfactory progress in basic skills. Generally, it is suitably matched to pupils' needs although in some classes there is insufficient challenge for the higher achieving pupils. The school is aware of the need to broaden experiences and has introduced some changes to ensure that a more creative curriculum is given greater prominence. The headteacher is active within the local schools' network and this has provided valuable creative opportunities for pupils. Visits to Drumcroon for art work and to the high school to work with professional artists, musicians and dancers have provided enjoyable opportunities for many. Current planning, however, does not progressively develop the skills and understanding of pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics. All of the staff provide good support, guidance and care to the pupils of St Jude's.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	3
Effective assessment	3
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	3
Support, guidance and care	2

How effective are leadership and management?

After several staff changes the headteacher has now successfully created a senior leadership team with complementary skills. Senior leaders are committed to raising achievement for all pupils while maintaining the inclusive nature of the school. Together they work hard and have implemented important changes to the way standards are monitored. Some staff absences have hindered the effectiveness of these approaches, but the improvements overall have been important in ensuring that the school moves forward through a difficult period. Senior leaders have a generally secure grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of school provision, and a fairly accurate view of the quality of teaching in each classroom. These evaluations are being used to set targets for each teacher in order to improve teaching for all groups of pupils. Systems for checking the progress different groups of pupils make in each class have been implemented. Information generated from these systems is beginning to be used to identify pupils who are possibly underachieving and to

identify those requiring additional support. The school believes its most recent information indicates that pupils are making good progress. This was not always supported by inspectors' observations of pupils' achievement throughout the school.

The school promotes equality of opportunity and is tackling discrimination but the impact of some weaker teaching results in some pupils not making the progress of which they are capable. An action plan to improve provision is in place and the school is evaluating its progress against set criteria. Although the school has information about the individual pupils it serves, the information is not yet fully used to evaluate the rates of progress of all the different groups of pupils or the participation in all areas of school life.

Governors provide support to the senior leadership team and have supported members of staff through the recent difficult period. The chair of governors and headteacher meet regularly and valuable information about the day-to-day running of the school is regularly disseminated to the governing body. The chair of governors discusses any views which come from other governors or parents with the headteacher to ensure a coordinated response. However, governors are not yet sufficiently involved in evaluating the effectiveness of the school and the impact of decisions.

The school has good working links with other local schools, the local authority and other agencies. Safeguarding arrangements meet current government requirements. Inspectors brought to the attention of the headteacher an issue of safety and it was immediately rectified. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Governors and staff have analysed the context in which they operate, developed a strategy and taken some action, for example a review of the school's admission policy. Senior leaders and governors are aware that procedures to evaluate the success of some of this action need to be further embedded into the work of the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	3
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	3
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	3
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	3
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	3
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Despite significant staffing changes, senior leaders have ensured that satisfactory

provision has been maintained across the Early Years Foundation Stage. Until recently, the skills and understanding of children when they join the Nursery was broadly similar to children of a similar age; although lower in communication, language and literacy; and personal, social and emotional development. However, school evidence shows that skills of children joining the school in the last two years are lower than previously. Most children settle quickly into school routines, generally know how to behave and make sound progress. Through effective arrangements for children starting school, parents are reassured that their children will be looked after in a safe environment. Staff develop positive relationships with children and parents. Children enjoy the range of activities provided in the indoor and outdoor areas which help them to develop basic skills in reading, writing and number. For example, children in the Reception class 'sign in' when they enter school in the morning and count the number of children in class that day. Recently, staff have worked hard to ensure that assessments of children's learning are more rigorous, leading to a more accurate view of the level at which each child is learning. This has improved the planning of adult-led activities which generally meet the needs of different groups of children. However, activities which enable children to follow their own curiosity, both indoors and outside, are not as well planned and do not always offer sufficient challenge. The extended care meets current welfare requirements, provides children with a satisfactory range of activities and children said they were happy.

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	3
Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school keeps their child safe and deals effectively with any incidents of unacceptable behaviour, and they felt their children enjoyed school. Parents particularly value the support given to children with additional needs.

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:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
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.



27 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Jude's Catholic Primary School, Wigan, WN3 5AN

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for making us feel so welcome and for being so helpful when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work and finding out about the things you like doing. Thank you especially to those of you who met with us and told us all about your school.

Your school is satisfactory. It has some good features. These are just some of the things that are good about it.

- You and your parents told us that you feel safe and that the school looks after you well. The staff are very caring and try to ensure that you are well looked after.
- You enjoy being part of the school community and the opportunity to get involved in parish activities.
- You know how to be healthy. The school does well in helping you to learn and think about staying healthy, although you would like more activities after school.
- Your behaviour is good.

We have asked your headteacher to work with the teachers to do the following things.

- Share good ideas and learn more from each other so that all groups of pupils in all classes make good progress.
- Plan activities which link different subject areas together so that you learn more.
- Organise activities for the younger children so they can develop their own curiosity and ideas both inside and outside the classroom.

We know that you will continue to work hard and try to help all the adults make the changes necessary to make your school even better than it is.

Yours sincerely

Eileen M Mulgrew
Her Majesty's Inspector

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