

St Anne's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104805
Local Authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	336367
Inspection dates	26–27 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Anna Dawson

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	308
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Knowles
Headteacher	Mrs Shelagh Malley
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons. All 13 teachers were observed. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and the Vice Chair, staff, groups of pupils, parents and carers, the School Improvement Partner and the local authority's adviser to the school. The inspectors observed the work of the school and that of pupils and looked at the school's policies, records of meetings, assessment and monitoring information, curriculum planning and the school improvement plan. In addition, 69 questionnaires were received from parents and carers and analysed.

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

- the achievement of the more able pupils in writing and mathematics
- whether the teaching meets the needs of all groups of pupils
- checking the strengths identified by the school
- the effectiveness of the school's priorities to raise standards.

Information about the school

This school is larger than most others nationally. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Five per cent are from minority ethnic groups, mainly from White and mixed ethnic backgrounds, which is below average. Of these, 3% speak English as an additional language, but none are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils on roll has increased since the last inspection. The headteacher was appointed in September 2009. The school has gained Healthy Schools status and the Quality Mark in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school provides before- and after-school care.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It is rapidly improving and has some outstanding features. Leaders ensure that it is fully inclusive and achieves its aim, founded in Christian values and beliefs, to be a lively and reflective school where pupils greatly enjoy learning. The school is well thought of in the local community. It has a good partnership with parents and carers, many of whom wrote positive comments in the questionnaires, such as, 'My child has always been encouraged to be the best she can be,' and, 'The teachers keep children highly motivated and care for their individual needs.' Pupils are polite, behave well and receive excellent care, guidance and support from the staff so they all achieve well. There is an outstanding partnership with the local community and outside agencies to ensure that pupils' needs are met and to increase pupils' learning opportunities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding. The school has improved attendance although it remains broadly average; this, together with pupils' broadly average skills in literacy and numeracy, prepares them satisfactorily for life ahead.

Children get off to a flying start in the Nursery. The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding and children achieve exceptionally well from their starting points by the end of their Reception Year. Progress is consistently good and sometimes better throughout Years 1 to 6 for the vast majority of pupils. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. Even though standards are rising, a small minority of the more able pupils do not achieve the higher standards of which they are capable in writing and mathematics because their work is not always sufficiently challenging. Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Lessons are interesting, with teachers often employing creative strategies to motivate pupils to learn. Information and communication technology (ICT) is often used well to support learning in lessons. The curriculum makes a positive contribution to the good quality of pupils' learning and to their rapidly improving progress.

The outstanding drive and ambition of the headteacher and senior leaders inspire staff to raise standards. Their success is evident in the rapid improvement within the last two terms, in pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics for many across the school. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is rigorous, leading to constant reflection and continual evaluation. This results in the successful implementation of strategies to meet the needs of individual and groups of pupils. Effective improvement since the previous inspection, accurate self-evaluation and the secure systems in place to raise standards further demonstrate the school's good capacity for further improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards further for a minority of the more able pupils in writing and mathematics by ensuring that their work is consistently challenging.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils love coming to school. They enjoy their lessons and learn well by finding out new things and learning new skills. Even so, their attendance is broadly average. The vast majority make good progress and sometimes better progress from their starting points throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, to attain broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. This is largely because teachers employ strategies from individual to small-group teaching as well as centering topics around pupils' interests. For example, Year 6 pupils, inspired by the story of Romeo and Juliet, worked exceptionally well in two teams of Capulets and Montagues. They successfully competed against one another to solve problems of proportion and ratio, by mixing 'potions' of differing quantities. Learning was rapid as problems were tailored to individuals' as well as groups' needs. Pupils not only felt ownership of the curriculum context but were also keen to investigate and find the correct solutions for their group. This illustrates how learning is resulting in a very marked improvement in standards because it is meeting most the pupils' needs and interests.

Pupils, particularly the average attaining and the majority of the more able, are doing well. However, a minority of the more able are yet to attain the higher levels of which they are capable. The gap is narrowing considerably between boys and girls. The girls are rapidly catching up, especially in mathematics, to attain similar standards to the boys. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are learning English as an additional language make good and at times very good progress and achieve well. Pupils identified as gifted and talented also make good progress.

The overwhelming majority of pupils say they feel safe and make healthy choices when eating snacks and lunches. Pupils are extremely sociable and know right from wrong. They understand who to turn to when they need help. They respect and are appreciative of the help and support from the staff. Older pupils show their maturity in their personal and social skills. For instance, in one lesson, a pupil could not think of anything they were good at, others immediately built the confidence and self-esteem of their classmate by listing strengths to be proud of. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities and have a strong sense of ownership of their school. Their voice is heard and taken account of through the school council and during lessons. Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is demonstrated effectively through their participation and enjoyment in many community activities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The well-being of all the pupils is at the heart of the school's work. Parents and carers agree with their children that the staff take exceptionally good care of them. Typical of other views, one pupil said, 'Our teachers really care about us.' There is a good emphasis placed on the development of personal and social skills, such as building pupils' self-confidence, as well as their reading, writing and speaking skills. Consequently, pupils are enabled to take advantage of all the school offers. Out-of-school care gives pupils a good settled start to the day. The work of the skilled teaching assistants, giving one-to-one and small-group support, is pivotal in building pupils' self-esteem. They play a major part in enabling pupils, particularly those who are the most vulnerable, to achieve well. There are extremely effective transition arrangements for pupils entering the school and for transferring to their next phase of education. As a result of the good and some outstanding teaching, pupils make good and at times very good progress. A variety of strategies are employed by the enthusiastic staff to create lively and interesting lessons that appeal to pupils. Subjects are successfully linked to topics which deepen pupils' understanding and prompt investigation. Skilled questioning generally challenges pupils to find out information for themselves. Pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. However, at times there is not enough challenge for a minority of the more able pupils. Pupils have a sense of ownership of the curriculum as they contribute their ideas to the topics they study. This keeps pupils interested and adds to their enjoyment in learning. Art, drama, music, and ICT are strongly represented subjects in the curriculum. Rich learning experiences are extended with trips to the locality or contributions from visitors to school which are

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linked to topics pupils study. Out-of-school activities provide plentiful opportunities for sport, music, dance and chess.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: 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 is understandably regarded highly by parents and carers, and pupils. Together with other senior leaders she gives a clear steer and provides the drive to improve performance. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and is shared between staff, governors, and parents and carers. Plans for improvement are sharply focused on raising the attainment of the more able pupils in writing and mathematics and are aimed at effectively developing pupils' personal and social skills and their particular talents. Staff work extremely hard in curriculum teams to develop provision further. Plans for improvement are continually monitored and adjusted when necessary to eradicate any weaknesses. As a result, the quality of pupils' writing and mathematics is rapidly improving. The successful work of the staff in promoting equality of opportunity is evident in the good achievement of the vast majority of the pupils. The achievement of the aim to raise standards, especially in writing and mathematics, is evident in the narrowing of the achievement gap between boys and girls and in the growing number of pupils attaining higher standards than previously. However, it is recognised that there are a small minority of the more able pupils who are capable of attaining higher standards.

Procedures to safeguard pupils are rigorous and requirements are met. Staff take great care to meet the needs of all pupils and are extremely successful in helping pupils to overcome any barriers to learning. This reflects the school's fully inclusive nature and the excellent partnership that exists with outside agencies and other partners to meet pupils' needs. Provision for community cohesion is good. The developing links with the community and other schools, including that with a school in Oldham, is enabling pupils to acquire a growing awareness and appreciation of diversity. The school has a good partnership with parents and carers who play a full part in school life. Representatives of the parent and carer body meet regularly with school leaders to share their views and to discuss current issues. Parents and carers benefit from the workshops that are provided for them, for example in literacy and numeracy, which puts them in a better position to help their children learn at home.

The governors, led by the very experienced Chair of the Governing Body, are skilled,

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knowledgeable and fully involved in helping to move the school forward. They discharge their responsibilities well and have particular expertise in the management of resources. Consequently, in view of pupils' outcomes, the school provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	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 vast majority of children enter the Nursery with language and social skills at levels below those usually expected of this age. Most make rapid progress. By the end of their Reception Year, a small minority attain the nationally expected early learning goals and others are working towards them. This is because the provision and leadership and management are outstanding. The skilled staff work as a cohesive team to ensure that they take extremely good care to meet the needs of all children. The learning environment is exciting and motivating. From the start, there is a sharp focus on the development of language and of personal and social skills. It is here that children make most progress. For instance, children's knowledge and understanding of sounds and letters is serving them well in helping them to read and write. Staff effectively use their assessments of children's learning and development to plan purposeful exploration and investigation, taking children's needs and interests into account. Consequently, children become confident and independent learners. The high-quality teaching motivates and inspires children to learn. The very good relationships built with parents and carers enable them to be full partners in their children's learning and development. The inclusive and rich provision not only maximises children's thinking and understanding, but adds to their enjoyment in learning.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Questionnaires were received from 18% of all parents and carers. They show they are very supportive and say that their children enjoy coming to school. Parents and carers are appreciative of the hard work of the staff and of the high quality of the care and support provided. A very few have any concerns. The inspection finds that behaviour is good overall and any disagreements are generally sorted out when brought to the attention of the staff. A few parents and carers have concerns about their children's progress. The inspection finds that children make good progress overall but agree that a small minority of the more able pupils should make better progress in writing and mathematics. The inspection also finds that children are effectively helped to lead a healthy lifestyle and that they are exceptionally well prepared to meet the transitions they make between the different phases of education.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Anne's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 308 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	75	17	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	49	71	19	28	0	0	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	36	52	32	46	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	59	25	36	2	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	44	64	25	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	57	30	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	57	27	39	2	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	42	61	23	33	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	57	28	41	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	46	31	45	3	4	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	48	32	46	0	0	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	44	64	24	35	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	67	21	30	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



28 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Anne's Catholic Primary School, St Helens WA9 3SP

Thank you for the welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work and were interested in all your activities. We give a special thank you to those of you who filled in your questionnaire for us. We agree with you that you really enjoy school and you appreciate that the staff take excellent care of you and help you to learn well. We judged your school as good overall, but with a number of things that are outstanding.

- Children get off to a flying start in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Your headteacher works extremely hard with other teachers and staff to improve your already good school.
- You get on very well with each other, help one another and think carefully how to find things out.
- The staff help all of you equally well to do your best.
- You get lots of opportunities to follow your interests. You go on trips and visits about your topic work and take part in a wide range of activities within your local area. All these activities add to your learning.

We have asked your teachers to look carefully at the work they give those of you who find learning easier than most in writing and mathematics, to help you to make better progress. You can all help by making sure you always try hard and do your best.

Yours sincerely

Anna Dawson

Lead Inspector

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