

St Paul's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105070
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	336414
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Graham Martin

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	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Corvers
Headteacher	Mrs D Weeden
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2007
School address	Farmfield Drive Beechwood Prenton CH43 7TE
Telephone number	0151 6527828
Fax number	0151 6527828
Email address	headteacher@stpauls.wirral.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2009
Inspection number	336414

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited five lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, parents and representatives from the local authority and the faith community. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at teachers' lessons plans, documentation for safeguarding pupils, the analysis of pupils' progress and test results, the school's plans for future developments and a range of policies. In addition, inspectors analysed 16 questionnaires returned by parents, 13 returned by staff and 40 completed by pupils.

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

- the impact of the school's work on improving pupils' progress and raising standards
- teachers' use of assessment information and its impact on pupils' progress
- the capacity of leaders to bring about sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Most pupils attending this smaller than average school are White British, with very few from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school serves an area with levels of unemployment much higher than the national average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is four times the national average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is double the national average. A similar proportion to that found nationally has a statement of special educational needs. Since the last inspection the school has successfully resisted a proposal to close it. There have been considerable staffing changes, including the appointment of a new deputy headteacher, in the last school year. The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Healthy Schools and Sports Mark Awards. It has also received a locally coordinated award for teaching fire safety awareness.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. It is a caring school where pupils feel safe. It provides good support for pupils with emotional or learning difficulties. Pupils are safeguarded well and receive effective support for their emotional well-being, underpinned by warm relationships between all staff and pupils. Pupils enjoy school, are eager to learn and behave well. Parents are supportive, want to help their children to succeed and are keen for their children to make the best possible progress.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are average. In 2009, standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 were similar to national averages. National test results for Year 6 pupils in 2009 were below average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Historically, achievement from a very low starting point is satisfactory and currently remains so. However, recently introduced systems for assessing achievement and promoting better learning are improving progress so that it is now good in Key Stage 1 and upper Key Stage 2.

Although most families ensure that their children attend regularly, a small number of families have unsatisfactory attitudes to attendance. The school makes great efforts to improve attendance but does not always apply its policies consistently. As a result, attendance is below average.

Teaching is satisfactory. It includes examples of good and outstanding practice, with a particular strength in the teaching for pupils in Year 5 and Year 6. Most teachers use their assessments effectively to plan work that matches pupils' abilities but this is not consistent throughout the school. For example, the marking of work does not always give pupils the support or guidance they need to help them make better than satisfactory progress. Support staff make a good contribution to learning because they are well informed about the needs of the pupils they support. The skilful Early Years Foundation Stage staff work hard to provide a satisfactory variety of learning activities for the youngest children but a lack of resources hinders their efforts.

Recent appointments have strengthened the leadership team, who work well together. Self-evaluation is effective and accurate. The school is now clear about how it will improve provision and raise standards, and it has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in all subjects, and particularly English and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that teaching is consistently good for all year groups
 - ensuring that assessment and consistent, appropriate marking of pupils' work

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

are used well to promote better learning and progress

- ensuring that pupils are aware of their learning targets and the best ways of meeting them.
- Improve attendance by:
 - consistently applying school policies on dealing with poor attendance.
- Improve the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - significantly improving the range and quality of resources so that teachers are able to use their skills more effectively to benefit children's learning.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Attainment is now in line with national averages in Key Stage 1 but below average in Key Stage 2. Pupils enjoy learning and are eager to extend their knowledge. They collaborate well in groups, as seen in an outstanding lesson for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils when they were asked to write a description of the journey of the Polar Express. This was a difficult task for some pupils but they persevered because the teacher gave them clear steps to take to succeed. Lesson observations indicate that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Their progress is better when the support for them is carefully planned. The more able pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons and this is accelerating. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and improving.

Pupils say that they feel safe and recall important messages from the Rescue Service and other visitors. Pupils are successful in developing healthy attitudes and are eager to keep fit and healthy. They enjoy being given responsibilities; for example, Year 6 pupils take a mature approach to helping to supervise Key Stage 1 pupils at lunch times. This contributes to the friendly community atmosphere. Pupils' contributions to the wider community are less well developed, although pupils work well to support their chosen charity, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD).

Pupils show a good understanding of how to respect and support others and their good moral development is reflected in their positive attitudes and behaviour. As one pupil explained, 'We want to help each other to be good and helpful.' Pupils have a clear understanding of the traditions of different faiths and cultures as a result of the school extending their awareness of life in a multicultural society. Pupils' good spiritual development is evident in their response to lessons that inspire their creativity and how they reflect on their aspirations in discussions about their future hopes and dreams.

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.

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

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan lessons carefully and make good use of support staff. This leads to lessons running smoothly because pupils have ready access to help. In most lessons, teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively to develop a point and add interest to the lesson. In the best lessons, teachers clearly explain the learning steps needed, often allocating a set amount of time to complete a task. This helps them to understand clearly how they can meet the lesson objective and produce work that shows exceptionally good progress. In other good lessons a variety of activities such as role play, drama and partner discussions, help improve communication skills. However, this good practice is not yet consistent throughout the school and across subjects. Where teaching is less effective, lessons do not always provide the range of opportunities needed for the different learning needs of pupils. In a few lessons expectations are not high enough and occasionally tasks do not closely match pupils' ability.

Marking in pupils' books is completed regularly and often includes encouragement and advice. There are examples of good marking but marking is not used effectively enough throughout the school in order to help pupils improve their work. Pupils are beginning to be involved in evaluating their own learning but this good practice is not fully embedded. Although pupils have targets, they do not always understand what they mean and so are unsure as to how to achieve them.

The school's programme to extend pupils' personal and social skills makes a good contribution to their spiritual, moral and social development. The move to combine subjects and provide a curriculum based around activities that meet pupils' interests and make learning more relevant is yielding benefits in pupils' enthusiasm for new topics. A

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

good range of visits, such as to a chocolate manufacturers while studying Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, enrich the curriculum. Similarly, visitors such as team members from the nearby league football club, promote pupils' interest in sport and living a healthy lifestyle.

The school's caring atmosphere contributes positively to increasing pupils' self-esteem and supporting their progress. Additional activities, such as good whole-school assemblies based around principles such as respect and tolerance, along with individual counselling sessions where required, are indicative of the school's commitment to supporting the more vulnerable pupils in the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior management team collects a wide range of useful information on teaching, the curriculum and pupils' progress. The use of this information to drive improvement is developing but there are more steps to take to ensure that practice is consistently improved. For example, checking how well teachers use their assessments to improve progress has enabled leaders to identify weaknesses in marking and to provide appropriate support. The school tackles discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity effectively, ensuring the full integration of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with a range of difficulties. With the more robust focus on improving the achievement of all, pupils are increasingly reaching their potential.

Governors play a suitable role in leading the school. They have been instrumental in making key appointments to the school staff and improving the condition of the building. They are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Having recently strengthened the governing body, governors are now confident to challenge the school to ensure that it sustains its recent improvements.

The school works hard to involve parents in supporting their children's learning. Communication with families, parents and carers is satisfactory. Staff are available as children arrive at school each day and parents welcome the opportunity to discuss their children and raise any concerns. Links with other partners are good, as seen very clearly in the support provided by the diocese and the local authority. Other good links, such as those with health providers, enable the school to provide well for pupils' welfare. The school makes every effort to ensure pupils' safety. Staff are checked for suitability to

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

work with children, child protection arrangements are in place and all safeguarding systems are effective.

The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. A suitable range of activities help the school to establish links with the local community and the work with CAFOD helps pupils to support the needs of other communities internationally.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start school with skills and understanding that are very low compared to those usually seen for this age, particularly in their communication and social skills. Staff work closely with parents and this helps the children to settle quickly. Children play confidently in safe areas, developing positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy coming to school and are eager to learn. They talk happily about what they are trying to do but often struggle for the right words because their vocabulary is limited. Even so, they thrive on success and show real joy in learning something new. Teachers' observations carefully record these learning steps so that assessments of children's progress help to inform the planning for their learning needs. Children's welfare, health and well-being are catered for successfully through diligent observations by the staff and good, caring and supportive relationships. Children play safely together, are friendly and enjoy sharing the games and toys available to them. They make good progress in their social development because they are well cared for and have a good rapport with their teachers. Teaching staff have good skills and work effectively to give the children suitable learning opportunities. They support children's learning well by planning activities that are topical, such as the winter theme North Pole role play area, and

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

relevant to the children's interests. However, the quality of teaching is satisfactory because it is hindered by a lack of suitable resources to interest and engage the children. The result is that by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's attainment remains low. Leadership is satisfactory and the school is beginning to address the lack of resources. For example, toys for physical development have recently been improved with the purchase of cycles and scooters, enabling teachers and children to make better use of the outside areas.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The response to the pre-inspection questionnaire was small and was largely positive about the quality of provision provided by the school. Comments included, 'I think that the pupils and teachers have done an amazing job with the changes in the last few months'. Inspectors agree. A small number of parents felt that the school could improve the way it communicates significant changes to them, such as the recent appointment of the new staff. Some also felt that they could understand the work of the school better if, for example, the reasons for employing supply teachers could be explained to them. Inspectors agree that the school has not always taken effective steps to communicate with parents about its staffing arrangements.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Paul'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 16 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 115 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	5	56	4	44	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	4	44	3	33	2	22	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	44	4	44	1	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	4	44	4	44	1	11	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	33	4	44	2	22	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	3	33	6	67	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	33	6	67	0	0	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)	3	33	6	67	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	33	6	67	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	44	3	33	2	22	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	33	6	67	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	3	33	5	56	1	11	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	4	44	5	56	0	0	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



27 November 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of St Paul's Catholic Primary School, Prenton, CH43 7TE

Thank you all so much for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed our visit at what was a busy time for the school, with you all making a start on the preparations for Christmas performances, which I know your families look forward to. Activities like this are obviously among the reasons why you enjoy school and are eager to learn. You behave well and care for each other and I agreed with your comments about your school being a friendly place. It was good to see you all being so energetic at play and keeping fit. I was also pleased to hear that the school teaches you how to keep safe. St Paul's provides a satisfactory education and is getting better.

To improve your school I have asked your headteacher and governors to:

- help you all to make good progress and reach higher standards, especially in English and mathematics
- make sure that your lessons are exciting and check that you are given work with the right level of challenge and difficulty
- check that you all understand your learning targets and that your teachers all mark your work in ways that tell you how to make it better
- improve your attendance
- provide the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage with resources that will help them to improve their learning.

I am sure that you will help, especially by attending regularly and by trying to do your best. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Graham Martin

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.