

St Paul's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111361
Local Authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	337669
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Clare Henderson

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Cantillon
Headteacher	Mrs Deirdre Whitfield
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 10 lessons taught by five teachers. They held meetings with groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work and looked at documents relating to safeguarding, the progress and attainment of pupils, the curriculum, the school's development plan and the way in which the school evaluates its own performance. The views of parents and carers, through 42 returned inspection questionnaires, and the views of staff were evaluated and reviewed.

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

- the level of challenge in lessons to encourage pupils to reach for higher standards
- the impact of curricular initiatives to develop a creative, skills-based curriculum
- the impact of the school's strategies to improve opportunities for children to learn through play in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the impact of the school's strategies for enhancing pupils' personal development and well-being.

Information about the school

The school is small in size. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups. A large majority of these pupils is at an early stage of learning to speak English. The school has gained the Inclusion Charter Mark, Becta's Information Communication and Technology (ICT) excellence, Healthy Schools, Activemark, Artsmark Silver and Sing Up music awards.

A pre-school Nursery is situated within the school grounds. This provision was subject to a separate inspection and a report about its quality can be found on the Ofsted website.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

'A wonderful community spirited school where the care of pupils is of equal value to educational achievement' and 'it is an extension of our family, a wonderful place to grow and learn where staff are always willing to do that little bit more'. These views of parents and carers are typical of almost all who responded to the questionnaire and capture in essence the drive and purpose of this outstanding school. At the heart of its success is outstanding leadership from senior leaders and governors.

In such a nurturing, safe and highly inclusive environment, where the school provides for equal opportunities in an exemplary manner, achievement for all groups of pupils is outstanding. Safeguarding procedures are excellent. Children start school with skills that are slightly below those typically expected for their age. Effective links with the pre-school Nursery are in place, with children often playing together and sharing facilities. However, the induction procedures as children move to the Reception class are not strong enough. During their time in school, all groups of pupils make outstanding progress and attainment in English, mathematics and science are consistently high by the time they leave in Year 6.

Pupils say they 'love school and feel very safe'. They have an outstanding understanding of health issues and willingly take on a wide range of responsibilities. Exemplary behaviour and pupils' tangible enjoyment of school are reflected in high attendance. Outstanding teaching and the highly effective use of assessment information engages pupils and the pace of learning is rapid. Similarly, exemplary care, support and guidance, contribute to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The highly creative curriculum is enriched with excellent features, including many opportunities for pupils to develop communication and problem-solving skills. The focus the school gives, through excellent partnerships with parents and carers, the local community, national and global links to developing pupils' experiences and knowledge of different cultural and religious differences, are outstanding.

An excellent track record of improvement since the last inspection effectively illustrates leaders' and governors' ambition and drive. The school is aware of its strengths and areas for development and has shown it takes highly effective action to tackle these issues. This commitment and achievements so far, illustrate very well the outstanding capacity that the school has to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop links with the pre-school Nursery in order to strengthen induction processes for children as they begin the Reception class.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Key to pupils' outstanding achievement is the incredible eagerness to learn that they display in all lessons. They embrace with great relish the high levels of challenge which teachers set. High prominence is given to developing communication, problem-solving and teamwork skills. These skills are developed imaginatively within lessons to broaden pupils' thinking and life experiences. For instance, gifted and talented pupils have recently been awarded a distinction in an Oxford University challenge for developing their strategic thinking, creativity and problem-solving skills. Similarly, pupils engage in drama in lessons to express their ideas verbally. This extends their speaking and listening skills giving them more confidence to write with fluency and creativity. Such high-quality learning ensures all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or at an early stage of learning English, make outstanding progress in their learning.

When they begin Year 1, most pupils are working in line with, or in terms of their personal development at above average levels. A high rate of learning continues as pupils become increasingly independent and self-confident and, by the end of Year 6, all pupils consistently reach high standards in English, mathematics and science. Highly effective learning opportunities to develop business enterprise skills ensure that pupils are very well prepared when they leave for the next stage in their education.

Pupils willingly take on a wide range of responsibilities. They feel adults listen to them and respond positively to their ideas. For instance, as school councillors, they engage in decision-making and are especially proud of their part in raising £1,450 for earthquake victims in Haiti. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils' attendance is high. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Celebrating the rich cultural heritage of pupils within the school is central. For example, one pupil confidently shared in assembly her Irish dancing skills as the school celebrated St Patrick's Day. Similarly, a link with a school in a contrasting cultural area resulted in pupils learning the skills of street dancing. Through these first-hand experiences, they learn respect and tolerance for others. Pupils fully understand how to maintain healthy lifestyles and why they should do so. At lunchtimes, older pupils trained as PhysKids leaders develop outstanding leadership qualities as they play games they have devised with the younger ones.

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

How effective is the provision?

Pupils are clear about each lesson's purpose and articulate their views with maturity in well thought out and inspiring activities. Pupils' well-honed skills of evaluating their own work ensure that learning proceeds at a lively and challenging pace. Teachers' ongoing review and assessment of pupils' work means that pupils have an extremely clear idea of what needs to be done next in order to maintain improvement. Tasks are matched precisely to pupils' ages, interests and varying abilities. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or at an early stage of learning English are expertly managed by talented teaching assistants.

The curriculum is extremely creative and exciting. Practical activities, such as drama and art, bring learning to life in a meaningful way. This was seen, for instance, in a Year 5/6 English lesson as pupils learnt to present a balanced argument. The teacher, in role as the interviewer for a debate on whether we should have school uniform, encouraged and prompted, through thought-provoking questions, pupils to argue for and against before committing their thoughts to paper. Residential visits, the opportunity to learn another language and an excellent range of after-school activities add purpose to pupils' learning and experiences very effectively. School life is interwoven closely with that of the local community. An example of this are the weekly singing sessions in which all pupils learn to use their voices as an instrument. It was inspirational to hear the whole school sing a Jamaican calypso in three-part harmonies and truly living out their belief that 'every person counts'.

Almost all parents and carers agree that care, support and guidance are outstanding. 'At St Paul's their first and foremost consideration is for the child and their individual needs.

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They are so caring and compassionate regarding each child's individual requirements' is a comment typical of them. Excellent partnerships with outside agencies help the more vulnerable pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are learning English as an additional language to make outstanding progress in their personal well-being.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher leads the school exceptionally well. Within this small school, teachers have a wide range of responsibilities. They manage these extremely well and all staff share an enthusiasm and commitment to extending their talents and skills for the benefit of the pupils. Meticulous attention is paid to the quality of teaching and learning and, particularly by the deputy headteacher, to meet the needs of all pupils, whose progress is checked thoroughly and provision is astutely adjusted where needed. Tackling discrimination and promoting equal opportunities for all is at the heart of the school's work. Links with parents and carers are excellent. The school grasps every opportunity through frequent information meetings and questionnaires to gauge and respond to their views. Governance is excellent. Governors are self-critical and reflective and challenge and hold the school to account in equal measure. Exemplary safeguarding procedures contribute very effectively to pupils feeling extremely safe and enjoying school immensely. The quality of community cohesion is outstanding because the school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn and meet, in this country and through international links, children from a wide range of religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

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	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1

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	
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Most children enter with skills that are in line with those expected, in terms of their social skills. However, their writing, mathematical and creative skills are slightly below those expected for this age. Well-planned indoor and continually improving outdoor learning environments develop well children's understanding of the world and their physical skills. Adults work hard to develop children's independence. For instance, as part of their letters and sounds work, children happily and confidently go in search of objects with an 'ow' sound which are hidden in the school grounds. They are so excited on completing the task to receive an 'ow' necklace that they wear with great pride. Such activities bring the learning of words and early reading skills to life in an exciting and practical way. Children make good progress in all areas of learning and begin Year 1 with average skills overall, although their personal development is above average. Adults are very attentive in ensuring that children are safe and all welfare requirements are met. Excellent links with parents, carers and outside agencies ensure that the social and emotional needs of each child are given close attention. Parents and carers particularly appreciate the high-quality learning journals which record meticulously their children's progress through Reception. Links with the pre-school Nursery are good overall. Leadership is good and adults work together as an effective team. They use assessments well to track children's progress.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of the 42 parents and carers who replied to the questionnaire say

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their children enjoy school, make excellent progress in their learning and that they feel the school keeps their children safe. A comment such as 'staff are always available to discuss any concerns and are helpful and knowledgeable' is a view typical of them. A few felt that their views were not taken into account or they had concerns regarding their children's progress. Evidence indicates that parents' and carers' individual and collective concerns are responded to appropriately in writing and that most parents and carers felt positively about these issues. Inspectors concur with the positive responses of parents and carers about many aspects of the school's work.

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 46 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 93 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	67	7	15	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	74	5	11	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	54	14	30	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	48	17	37	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	65	8	17	2	4	3	7
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	57	12	26	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	50	14	30	0	0	1	2
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)	27	59	11	24	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	48	16	35	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	54	16	35	0	0	4	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	59	11	24	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	61	9	20	2	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	67	7	15	2	4	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.



18 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Paul's Catholic Primary School, Stockport, SK12 1LY

I would like to thank you for the help you gave to the team when we inspected your school. We especially enjoyed watching Year 5 and 6 pupils lead the 'Phys Kids' and when you all sang your Jamaican calypso. Now I would like to share with you what the inspection found out about your school.

We judge that you go to an outstanding school. It was good to hear how much you like coming to school and enjoy learning and that you make outstanding progress in your English, mathematics and science. It was also pleasing to hear about how safe you feel in school and that there is always someone to talk to if you have concerns. Your behaviour is exemplary and you know so much about how to keep healthy. Those of you involved in the school council, road safety or buddies take your duties seriously. We were very impressed with your responsible attitudes and the way you consider each other's feelings often before your own, for instance, in organising the Fun Run for Haiti. You get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Your teachers and other staff help you to achieve exceptionally well in your lessons. The school takes outstanding care of you and helps you to get on well together. The curriculum is outstanding and gives you so many exciting opportunities for after-school activities. The headteacher and governors want the school to become even better. I have asked them to do one thing to improve the school and it is to:

- make even better links with the pre-school Nursery to help children settle into reception even more quickly.

I hope you all continue to have a happy and successful time in your school.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Clare Henderson

Lead Inspector

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