

St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124359
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	340551
Inspection dates	30 September –1 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Wordsworth HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	426
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Father Anthony Dykes
Headteacher	Mr Nathan Price
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons, and held meetings with a governor, staff, parents and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to self-evaluation, the tracking of pupils' progress and the safeguarding of pupils. They analysed the responses of 100 parental questionnaires.

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

- the way in which senior leaders check the quality of the school's work to plan future improvements
- how well the school supports and safeguards pupils
- issues raised by staff, pupils and parents in the returned questionnaires.

Information about the school

The school is considerably larger than most primary schools. The building has recently been extended to provide new accommodation for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and none speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. The school runs before and after school clubs managed by the governing body.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The overall effectiveness of the school is inadequate because the leaders and managers are failing to adequately secure pupils' health, safety and well-being. Pupils are not learning as well as they should because weaknesses in teaching are not being tackled rigorously. The satisfactory progress pupils make is much to do with their positive attitudes to their work. While safeguarding policies and systems are in place, they are not monitored regularly with sufficient rigour. The school has not taken steps to keep abreast of current government requirements for safeguarding children and has not updated procedures and staff training accordingly. For example, assessments of potential health and safety hazards are carried out but with insufficient detail to sufficiently reduce risk. Most importantly there is inadequate supervision of the car park outside the school, which is congested at peak times and has resulted in some minor incidents. The actions taken to-date, such as regularly reminding parents about parking safely, are insufficient to ensure the pupils' health and safety. These require immediate remedial attention.

The quality of teaching is inconsistent and inadequate overall. Inspectors observed some good and better teaching but in too many lessons relationships between pupils and staff are fragile. Pupils generally behave well. However, teachers are not using a range of approaches to encourage their good behaviour, often relying on shouting as a means of control. Some staff speak harshly to pupils, which has a negative effect on relationships and, notably, on learning. Pupils say they have reported to staff incidents of what they perceive to be staff bullying and occasions when they had been treated unfairly, but inspectors could find no record of the events or of any action taken. Assessment information is not used effectively to match work closely enough to pupils' differing capabilities. A small minority of teaching fails to capture the pupils' interest and enthusiasm. As a result, these pupils do not enjoy their learning. Some pupils are also unhappy with aspects of school life, such as the system of rewards and sanctions and feel that that the school is not always receptive to their views.

Senior leaders are unable to embed ambition or drive improvement because monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is not focused or rigorous enough. Responses from those staff who returned a questionnaire indicate that there are number of unresolved issues within the school and, as result, the senior leaders have lost the confidence of a

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number of staff.

The school improvement plan lacks clarity and precision in communicating how the school should move forward. Furthermore, insufficient progress has been made in addressing a number of the key areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report, demonstrating that school does not have the capacity for sustained improvement.

Much of the school's assessment and tracking of pupil progress data is confusing and difficult to follow. As result, expectations are not high enough and systems to secure greater consistency in teaching and learning are ineffective, with little use made of challenging targets. Although school leaders monitor teaching and learning, it is not frequent or rigorous enough because leaders do not revisit classes to check that agreed developments or whole school policies have been implemented. As a result pupils' experiences in different classes have been uneven, and their pace of learning inconsistent. This is reflected in the number of staff, pupils and parents raising their concerns regarding some important aspects of the school life. This includes a small minority of parents who feel that their children are treated unfairly. Given the school's lack of compliance and understanding of safeguarding requirements and that some staff, pupils and parents feel unsupported and uncared for, the effectiveness of care, guidance and support is inadequate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements by:
 - updating the school's single central record in line with government requirements and providing all adults with the required training
 - providing adequate supervision of pupils before and after school
 - carrying out regular and robust risk assessments and updating them in a timely manner
 - managing pupils' behaviour consistently and fairly, recording any incidents accurately.
- To improve the quality of teaching across the school, teachers should:
 - make very clear to pupils what they are going to learn and explain to them how their success will be measured
 - ensure that, lesson planning makes effective use of assessment information to enable them to plan lessons that provide work at the right level for children of all abilities
 - ensure that when they mark pupils' work, teachers explain what pupils must improve in order to reach the next level
 - set clear expectations and guidance for what the school wants to see in lessons and establish robust systems to check that all staff follow it, particularly in managing pupils' behaviour.

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- To improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement, leaders and managers should:
 - set a clear direction for the school that focuses on improvements to achievement and quality of teaching by strengthening the role of all leaders and holding all staff accountable for pupils' progress
 - further refine the tracking of pupils' progress to determine the progress made by different groups and inform intervention
 - be more systematic in following up weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment within challenging timescales
 - in all strategic planning, add specific, quantifiable and timed targets, so that progress towards them is measurable and can be reported accurately.

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

Standards are variable although broadly average. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress from their individual starting points. However, occasionally, a few of the more able pupils, while making satisfactory progress, do not reach levels worthy of their capabilities because teaching does not always challenge their thinking in exciting, interesting ways and some of the activities they are presented with do not match their needs.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social awareness is satisfactory, with many pupils having a keen sense of right and wrong. They acquire a range of social skills that will help them to develop into well-rounded individuals. They make a sound contribution to the school community through their involvement in the school council and their support for younger pupils. Their participation in charitable and fund raising events ensure that pupils are developing a satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities in the wider community. However, there are very limited opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge of other cultures and beliefs. Pupils have a satisfactory and growing awareness of how to keep healthy and of how to help look after the environment, with their learning supported by the introduction of a school vegetable garden.

Although some pupils say they feel safe, they are not confident that any worries or troubles will be dealt with effectively because adults are not always sensitive to their needs. Furthermore, a minority report that they feel that they are treated unfairly and, as a result, they do not enjoy their learning and a few feel unsafe.

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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	4
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Although the majority of lessons observed were satisfactory or good, with one that was outstanding, a small minority of lessons were inadequate. Overall, teaching is inadequate because lessons are not always planned clearly enough, based on the needs of individual pupils and too many pupils do not enjoy their learning. Teachers are not using the information gained from assessment activities and their knowledge of pupils' prior attainment well enough to pitch their lessons with sufficient precision to identify exactly what different groups of pupils need to learn next. The quality of teachers' marking is weak and inconsistent. Overall, it is not giving enough guidance to help pupils know what they need to do next to improve their work.

The breakfast and after school clubs are well established and provide a satisfactory level of care and a range of activities that pupils enjoy. Nonetheless, the pastoral arrangements in the main school are inconsistently applied, with the school sometimes slow to recognise that some pupils are experiencing problems, particularly at a personal level. As a result, pupils are unclear what is expected from them and a majority of those who spoke to inspectors felt that some staff respect their views and feelings more than others.

Despite these shortcomings, pupils collaborate well in pairs and small groups and are willing to help others when they encounter difficulties. When they are challenged by their lessons, they show real enjoyment and enthusiasm.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, fulfilling statutory requirements, and is satisfactorily enriched through out of school clubs and visits. Curricular planning, including that for English, mathematics and science, does not focus well enough on

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developing key skills or ensuring that each unit of work places sufficient demands on pupils. This lack of challenge is further compounded by the over-reliance on worksheets that are inadequately matched to the pupils' needs. This has a particular impact on writing, where the school misses opportunities to consolidate skills taught in English lessons and to increase the range and extent of pupils' writing.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	4

How effective are leadership and management?

Strategic planning and self-evaluation are weak. The school's self-evaluation is too generous as it focuses on what the school is doing, rather than assessing and analysing the impact of interventions on learning and other outcomes for pupils. Senior leaders are not rigorous enough in checking the effectiveness of provision or the learning and progress of pupils. Their evaluation is not sufficiently thorough to provide palpable evidence that new initiatives are working.

The school has successfully reduced the gap in performance between girls and boys and provides satisfactory support for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the analysis of assessment information is not accurate enough to help staff track the pupils' progress and achievement with certainty. This is because the school's leaders do not analyse the information they collect with sufficient rigour in terms of the performance of different groups of pupils. Additionally, the school has not yet undertaken an evaluation of the impact of its policies on equal opportunities, as required. Similarly, there is more work to do relating to community cohesion because the school has not adopted an explicit strategy for preparing all pupils for life in an ethnically and culturally diverse society. The leadership team has not yet realised the full extent of its duty to promote community cohesion; therefore, measures to promote community cohesion are currently inadequate.

Most parents are supportive of the school and appreciate the regular information they receive regarding their children's progress. Nonetheless, the inspectors took note of a small minority of strongly expressed parental concerns. Inspectors examined relevant records, spoke with parents and staff and balanced these against pupils' comments and what they saw during their visit, concluding that their concerns were well founded.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	4
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

On entry to the school, the attainment of the children is in line with that expected for their age. The majority of children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress by the time they leave Reception. The children play well on their own or as part of a group. However, the balance between work directed by the teacher and a range of other guided activities is not always appropriate with too much time spent on whole class teaching or activities led by adults. Furthermore, curriculum planning does not provide experiences that are appropriate to each child's stage of development and does not fulfil the requirement for the six areas of learning and development to be delivered through planned purposeful play.

Leadership is inadequate because the co-ordinator has an insufficient grasp of how the curriculum should be modified to take into account assessment information. There is also a failure to ensure all of the mandatory welfare requirements are met. This is because staff with responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage are not based in this phase. This prevents them from having an in-depth knowledge of the day-to-day running the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents who returned questionnaires expressed their strong support and appreciation of most of the school's work. In particular, they are pleased that children are helped to settle into the Early Years Foundation Stage and that pupils are expected to work hard. Nonetheless, a small minority of parents who wrote letters to the inspection team feel that they are not always kept well informed of their children's progress, that the school has not taken adequate steps to ensure their children's safety in the car park and that their children are being treated unfairly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Wulstan's 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 100 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 426 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	66	32	32	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	73	73	27	27	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	41	54	54	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	47	46	46	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	50	50	47	47	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	46	50	50	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	49	48	48	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)	49	49	44	44	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	50	50	43	43	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	43	49	49	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	39	55	55	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	56	56	40	40	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	63	35	35	2	2	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.



1 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Wulstan's Primary School, Newcastle-Under-Lyme, ST5 0ES.

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We were particularly impressed by your kindness and the way you offered to help us without being asked. We appreciate your openness and the time and trouble you took to talk with us. We were very sorry to hear that some of you feel that you are treated unfairly and that you feel that your views are not taken seriously. We have mentioned this to those who look after you and asked them to make sure this does not happen.

There are some satisfactory things about the school, such as you try to listen carefully to what your teachers have to tell you. However, we have decided to place the school in special measures because it needs help to make improvements quickly.

Inspectors will visit the school regularly in the future to check how well it is doing. In the meantime, we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to do a number of things to make it better. We have asked them to:

- keep a closer eye on your progress and make sure that important policies and routines are the very best they can be, especially the ones that help keep you safe
- make sure that everyone is given work at exactly the right level so that it is not too easy or too difficult
- make sure you know what you are aiming for in a lesson and how to improve
- make sure that you are all treated fairly.

You can help your school improve further by continuing to try your best in all you do. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth

Her Majesty's Inspector

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