

Holy Family Catholic Primary School Platt Bridge

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106496
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	309147
Inspection date	1 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Aitken

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 on roll	
School	275
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs L Atherton
Headteacher	Mrs M Marsh
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2004
School address	Wigan Street Platt Bridge Wigan Lancashire WN2 5JF
Telephone number	01942 704148
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the impact of the school's actions to further improve writing; and the impact of the school's initiatives to strengthen assessment to support pupils' learning. The inspector gathered evidence from the school's self-evaluation form, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes, parents' questionnaires and observation of the school at work. Interviews were conducted with senior members of staff, the chair of governors and with pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in similar detail. The inspection found that the school's assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were accurate and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This school is situated in a southern suburb of the town. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The school holds the National Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark Award and the Wigan Quality Standard accreditation for the Foundation Stage

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Children's excellent start in the Foundation Stage provides a strong basis for their future learning. By the end of Year 6, pupils make exceptional progress to reach above average standards in English, mathematics, science and also in art. Parents are very satisfied with the quality of education their children receive. In particular, they value the high standard of teaching provided by the caring staff.

Standards in Year 2 over the last two years have been broadly average with pupils making good progress in all subjects. Pupils' progress accelerates in Key Stage 2 in tandem with their growing maturity. In recent years, standards have risen steadily in this key stage. In 2007, standards in Year 6 were well above average overall and high in English and science. Pupils did exceptionally well in their writing, reflecting the success of the school's strategies to improve writing skills. The slight drop in overall standards in the present Year 6 is accounted for by the considerably larger proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the class. All groups of learners make excellent progress.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Particular strengths are pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, their behaviour and their enjoyment of school. Pupils believe that they are well looked after and that their voice carries weight. Respect between staff and pupils is mutual and pupils conduct themselves very responsibly. Relationships are excellent and form the bedrock of what pupils report is a 'happy' school. Older pupils make good use of opportunities to help the younger ones, for example, as play-leaders, while the school council and eco-groups are fully involved in actions to improve the appearance of the school grounds and classrooms. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their 'can-do' attitudes towards their learning. Pupils have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles. Their excellent achievement in literacy and numeracy sets them up very well for secondary education.

The procedures to ensure pupils' welfare are regularly monitored and updated by the staff. Arrangements to safeguard children meet current government guidelines. The school has effective liaison with outside agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Pupils feel very safe in school, secure in the knowledge that any concerns deposited in the 'worry box' will be acted on swiftly by the staff. Tracking procedures are well established and rigorous. They ensure that pupils with additional needs are identified quickly for the extra support they require. Individual education plans are regularly reviewed and contain the precise guidance to enable these pupils to make the necessary small steps in their learning. Teachers make good use of individual pupils' targets to help all pupils improve their learning. The school works hard to raise pupils' attendance. While this has improved a little this year, overall attendance remains satisfactory, rather than good.

The consistently high quality of teaching and learning in all year groups means that overall, the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' endeavour in lessons and use a wide range of imaginative and attractive resources which enthuse all learners. Classrooms are hives of activity where all pupils are fully involved in, and excited by, their learning. Excellent relationships enable pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills well. Teachers' planning provides very clear direction for pupils' learning. The content of lessons is closely linked to the new skills and knowledge the pupils are expected to acquire. Pupils' learning is regularly checked, including at the end of lessons, to ensure that all pupils understand what they have just learnt. In this way, no-one is left behind and pupils know how

to do even better in their next lesson in the subject. Teaching assistants are very effective in supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The curriculum supports pupils' academic achievement and personal development exceptionally well. A recent initiative, the 'Context for Learning', aimed at raising standards further in subjects other than English, mathematics and science is highly popular with pupils. For example, they very much enjoy the opportunities to widen their geographical knowledge about the rain-forests, while developing their skills in the creative arts. Well planned enrichment afternoons and 'Super Learning Days' add extra spice to pupils' learning. The curriculum is further enriched by a good range of visits, including residential stays, visitors to school and after school activities, especially in sport. Links with the local high school have been used effectively to support gifted and talented pupils in extending their numeracy skills.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Despite significant changes in staffing at all levels in recent years, the school continues to steer a very clear course of continuous improvement. Management systems are well established and robust. The senior leaders provide complementary strengths that ensure that all aspects of the school's work are carefully monitored. Accountability for pupils' progress is clearly linked to arrangements for the performance management of staff. The very good teamwork amongst the staff and their consistently high expectations for pupils' progress are reflected in pupils' outstanding achievement. Pupils meet and often exceed very challenging targets. Governors support the school well. The school offers excellent value for money and is very well set for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

On entry to the Foundation Stage children's skills are below national expectations in all aspects of their learning and well below in their listening and speaking skills. Children make outstanding progress so that by the time they join Year 1 their overall skills are at least in line with those expected for their age. They make very good progress in their speaking and listening skills. First, because adults spend a lot of time talking to them purposefully and second, because of the excellent relationships the children develop with each other. Staff look after the children very well. Consequently, children quickly learn to become self-reliant and to behave very responsibly. The teachers provide a range of high quality activities and experiences to ensure children are constantly involved in their learning. These activities are often firmly based on very clear themes, so that the children understand quickly how to make connections in their learning and what they are aiming to achieve. Children are very well supported by a rich range of indoor resources which stimulate their curiosity and creativity. Teaching is highly effective in developing children's skills through a good range of precise and challenging questions. Other adults who work with the children are pro-active in their support for the teachers, both in developing the children's thinking skills and in recording their achievements. Assessment systems are well organised and the information gained is used well to write lesson plans precisely tailored to meet the needs of all children. The Foundation Stage has made substantial improvement since it was last inspected. It is led and managed exceptionally well.

What the school should do to improve further

- To improve attendance so that it more closely matches the excellence of all other areas of the school's work.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Holy Family Catholic Primary School Platt Bridge, Wigan, WN2 5JF

I am writing to thank you for your help when I visited your school recently and to tell you what I found out. You told me you enjoyed school a lot, including the new 'Context for Learning' lessons. I saw an example of this lesson in the afternoon but it did not take me until then to see how much you enjoyed your learning.

Your school is outstanding. After the excellent start the young children have in Nursery and Reception, your school helps you to make really good progress. By the end of Year 6 the standards you reach are above average, which sets you up very well for your secondary education. Your personal development is outstanding. I was particularly impressed by the excellent relationships you have with each other and your teachers and teaching assistants, not to mention your very good behaviour and attitudes towards your learning. Much of this is down to the teachers. They look after you very well. You told me how safe you felt in school and how the staff kept a close check on the worry box, so that if you need help they can provide it. The teachers make sure you are given lots of interesting things to do. As a result there is always a buzz to lessons and you are always working hard and learning new things. Your hard work and enjoyment in what you are doing are two of the key reasons why you do so well. The teachers also check your work carefully to help you understand what you are learning and give you lots of opportunities to show what you know and can do.

The standard of your work has risen recently, not least because the headteacher and the staff keep a close check on how well you progress every year. Your school is in very good hands. I have asked the headteacher to do one thing to make your school even better. This is to make sure that the recent improvement in your attendance gets even better so that all of you get the very best of what the school has to offer.

You can help by continuing to work hard and coming to school very regularly.