

The Willows Catholic Primary School, Kirkham

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119626
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	358595
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Brian Holmes

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	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Gerrie Byrnes
Headteacher	Mrs Amanda Gregory
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited eight lessons and observed six teachers. They held meetings with parents, groups of pupils, governors and staff. The inspection observed the school's work and looked at its assessment data, evidence of activities and events, information about the curriculum, and monitoring and evaluation documents. Inspectors analysed 109 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 71 pupil questionnaires and 13 questionnaires returned by staff.

Whether the school's strategies to improve attainment, particularly for boys, are effective.

Whether the school has been effective in improving pupils' progress in Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics.

Whether progress for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good, as the school judges it to be.

Whether the curriculum has been sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of all pupils and improve rates of progress.

Whether leaders are effective in ensuring that the actions they take improve outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

The Willows is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There are a very small number of pupils who are from minority ethnic heritage and at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average. There has been a recent change to the leadership of the school. During the inspection the school was led by an associate headteacher. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status and the Learning Excellence award for modern foreign languages.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Senior leaders and governors have led the school well through its recent difficult period and, together with all staff, are highly committed to the further improvement of the school. Parents and carers are appreciative of this commitment and of the levels of care and support that are provided for their children. Typically, one parent commented, 'There is a strong family feeling, with everyone working together'. The school's motto 'God loves me, God loves everyone' is clearly evident in its everyday working.

All pupils make good progress from their different starting points. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enter Reception with skills and abilities below those expected, and well below in writing. They make good progress to achieve outcomes at least in line with the average by the time they enter Year 1. Across the school, all groups of pupils achieve well to attain standards that are above average by the end of Year 6. Rates of progress are improving in Key Stage 2 and attainment in writing has improved, and is now as good as in reading and mathematics. Leaders have focused well on improving the quality of teaching and curriculum provision, both of which are good. The use of assessment has improved and the marking of pupils' work is effective in literacy but is not consistently good in every subject. The development of the curriculum to strengthen links between subjects has improved pupils' enjoyment of learning but pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to apply their writing, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in all their subjects.

Pupils feel safe and their behaviour is good. They have a positive understanding of how to live healthily, relate well to each other and are clear that they enjoy their learning, typically describing it as 'fun'. They have good opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and community; for example, through the work they are doing to revise the school's behaviour code. Through their above average attendance and good attainment and personal development, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Through accurate self-evaluation, they have consolidated and maintained the school's good performance. The improvements in attainment in writing, in boy's achievement and in progress in Key Stage 2 are clear indications that the school has a good capacity to sustain its improvement further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the impact of teaching and the curriculum on pupils' attainment by:
 - making marking as effective in all subjects, as it is in literacy, to move pupils' learning forward

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- provide pupils with more opportunities to apply their writing, numeracy and ICT skills in all subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' achievement is good and they enjoy their learning. Their learning and progress are consistently good across the school. Attainment in writing has improved in the current academic year and is in line with pupils' above average attainment in reading and mathematics. Pupils make outstanding progress in writing across the school from a low starting point. The achievement of boys has improved, and the gap between their achievement and that of girls is closing. Progress in Key Stage 2 is good and is more consistent in enabling all pupils to make expected or better progress by the end of Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the good support they receive and the specific programmes used to address their individual learning needs. Typically, pupils are fully engaged in their learning and motivated to succeed. They are given good opportunities to work collaboratively in pairs and small groups. They work well independently, as seen in a Year 3 and 4 lesson, when pupils were allocated specific roles as 'chair' and 'scribe' within a group to manage their own learning. Occasionally, the pace of learning slows when teachers talk for too long and pupils are not given enough opportunities to learn independently.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and are confident that any worries they have are quickly dealt with. Older pupils act as 'buddies' for younger pupils on the playground. Their behaviour is welcoming and positive and makes a good contribution to their learning. There is a good take-up of opportunities to participate in sport and exercise and a good understanding of the need for a healthy diet, with pupils taking responsibility for the salad bar at lunchtimes. The school council is active in leading the pupils' contribution to the life of the school, through improvements to the playground and play equipment. There are close links in the local community with older residents and with a nearby school. Pupils demonstrate a good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Through their learning, they have good opportunities to reflect and think for themselves, as in Year 1, where pupils reflect on 'I can say who cares for me.'

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is characterised by good relationships between adults and pupils. ICT is used well to stimulate pupils' interest and to make expectations clear. Teaching maintains pupils' interest through the use of a good range of strategies to involve them in their learning. The needs of all pupils are met through good use of assessment, good questioning and application of secure subject knowledge to plan work that matches different needs. In a numeracy lesson in Years 4 and 5, more-able pupils worked conscientiously on increasing their knowledge and understanding of ratio while the pace and challenge of learning was maintained for other groups through the use of 'spot' tasks. Very occasionally, tasks that are set present too little challenge. Assessment is used well to share objectives with pupils and to check their understanding during, and at the end of lessons. Marking in literacy makes clear to pupils what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work, but the quality of marking is not as high in other subjects, lacking clarity and with inconsistent guidance for pupils on what to do next.

The curriculum contributes well to pupils' achievement. The focus on writing and on developing a broader curriculum has been effective in motivating different groups of pupils, such as boys. Topics such as 'Dinosaurs' and 'Jungles' have positively stimulated pupils' interest and enjoyment of learning, impacting well on their attainment in writing. However, opportunities to apply writing skills, numeracy and ICT skills in all subjects are inconsistent. Good practice that the school can build on was seen in the Year 2 work on

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'Dinosaurs'. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development and is enriched by a good range of additional activities, such as modern foreign languages. Take-up of additional activities is good and pupils spoke favourably about their enjoyment of them, quoting African drumming and celebration of the Chinese New Year as examples of what is on offer.

Pupils are well cared for. The strong ethos of care at the heart of the school's work ensures that the needs of individual pupils are met. It has a good impact on the well-being of all pupils. There are good relationships between adults and pupils, which are appreciated by parents. Effective systems are in place for checking pupils' attendance, as are good arrangements for the transfer of pupils to other schools.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders and governors have a clear commitment to improving pupils' achievement and are effectively tackling weaknesses through thorough checking of pupils' performance and of the school's provision. These systems have led to the accurate identification of areas for improvement and to effective action being taken to address them. As a result, attainment has improved, particularly in writing, and the gap between the achievement of boys and girls is narrowing. The school promotes equality well and is taking effective action to ensure that the needs of all pupils are effectively addressed. The governing body is fully involved in shaping the direction of the school and is increasingly involved in the school's self-evaluation processes through their checking of key aspects of its work. It has worked successfully to ensure the smooth running of the school during the transition of leadership. Arrangements for safeguarding are effective and are well supported by clear strategies and procedures, such as liaising with outside agencies to support parents. There are effective partnerships with parents and carers, and with other schools and agencies to support pupils' learning and well-being. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The school is a harmonious and cohesive community with good links in the local area. Plans to promote pupils' understanding beyond the immediate locality of the school are appropriate but at an early stage of implementation.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. There are good links with parents and carers, who are clear that their children enjoy the setting. Effective leadership has established a good working relationship among adults working in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good assessment procedures have identified that early writing skills are particularly weak, especially those of boys. Adult-led activities are well planned and stimulate children's interest. Children made films of the story of the Three Little Pigs to develop their speaking and listening skills and were excited when the results were shown to the whole class.

There is a strong focus on the safety and welfare of children, which results in a safe and secure learning environment where the needs of all children are met well. Children settle quickly and happily, and enjoy good relationships with each other and the adults around them. Good use is made of a small and cramped outdoor area, such as when a group of boys engaged in imaginative play to re-enact the story of the wolf. Children demonstrate good personal and social development in making independent choices in their learning, sharing resources when playing or looking at books together and listening to stories on the computer. Progress is good in all areas of learning from starting points that are below average. By the time children enter Year 1, outcomes are at least in line with the average.

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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

Inspectors' findings endorse the views of the large majority of parents and carers who are very happy with their children's experiences at school, feeling that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps their children safe. Several parents commented positively on how well the school had supported them and their children during the school's recent difficulties. A few parents expressed concern about how the school informs them about their children's progress and how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection concluded that the school provides parents with good information about their children's progress. Standards of behaviour are good and any issues that do occur are quickly and effectively addressed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Willows Catholic Primary School, Kirkham 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 inspector received 109 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 142 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	64	39	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	71	65	35	32	3	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	55	50	42	39	10	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	48	44	56	51	5	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	66	61	40	37	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	50	50	46	3	3	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	50	51	47	3	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	39	36	55	50	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	50	52	48	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	40	37	55	50	11	10	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	37	61	56	7	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	27	72	66	8	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	60	55	48	44	1	1	0	0

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



4 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Willows Catholic Primary School, Kirkham, Preston, PR4 2BT

Thank you for being so polite, welcoming and friendly when I inspected your school recently. I enjoyed my time at The Willows, particularly talking to you, I know that you are proud of your school and enjoy being there.

The Willows is a good school, with many strengths. I was impressed by your good behaviour, your good attendance and by how well you all get on with each other. You have a good understanding of how to stay safe and live healthily. You are taught well and make good progress in your learning. The standards you reach are higher than they are in most schools. You told me that your teachers make your learning fun and that they are kind and helpful. You enjoy the activities that the school offers and like the opportunities the school gives you to be involved in making a contribution to the school through the work of the school council or as buddies for younger pupils.

We are asking the school to improve your education further by providing you with more opportunities to use your writing, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills in all your subjects. We are also asking teachers to make sure that their marking of your work helps you to understand how to improve your learning in all subjects as well as it does in literacy.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard, behaving well and doing your best to help the school improve further.

With very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Holmes

Lead inspector

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