

St Clare's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111311
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	356890
Inspection dates	18–19 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Diane Auton

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	127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Fiona Arnott
Headteacher	Mr Terry Daltrey
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited six lessons and observed five teachers in their classrooms. They held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including pupils' progress and attainment data, the school's planning documents, policies, procedures and records. They reviewed information provided by parents in 34 completed questionnaires. They also took into account the views pupils and staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned.

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 ensuring that pupils progress and attain as well as possible, especially in English, and on ironing out inconsistencies between year groups and subjects.
- How effectively provision builds on pupils' skills from year to year and how successful the school has been in ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better.
- How effectively provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables children to progress in their learning and development.

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average primary school serves a residential area of mixed housing. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Since its last inspection the school has successfully renewed its Activemark and has gained Healthy School status; the governing body has also gained accreditation against the Financial Management Standard in Schools.

Pre-school childcare is offered on site by an independent company. This provision is subject to separate inspection and the report is available 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This good, inclusive school serves the needs of its community with dedication and care. Pupils with a range of individual needs learn and play together harmoniously and the school is a happy place of learning. Well led, effective practitioners ensure that lessons are planned well to meet the needs of all pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and apply themselves well. Their overall progress in learning is good and their attainment, although currently average, is rising.

Successful learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage gets their education off to a good start, despite most children's low skill levels on entry. Pupils continue to progress well throughout the school and go on to achieve broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Good teaching is underpinned by the effective use of assessment. Although the quality of provision is evaluated regularly, a small proportion of satisfactory teaching remains. Expectations are high and pupils respond to this positively, growing in confidence as learners. Careful consideration is given to pupils' welfare. Sensitive and effective support provided for pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, enables them to make good progress.

Continuous improvements in provision are having a positive impact. The school is aware, however, that progress in mathematics is not consistent enough across the year groups and mathematics is correctly identified as a priority area in the school development plan. The information gained from progress reviews is used well to inform the school's strategic planning, although currently this information is not shared fully with all staff and governors.

The school recognises the need to reorganise its outdoor area for the Reception class, in order to provide a wider range of opportunities for children to learn through active play.

The headteacher has created a strong team ethos, with a clear focus on school improvement. Self-evaluation is largely accurate, based on systematic monitoring. The school tracks pupils' progress carefully and reviews it each term. This has enabled underachieving pupils and those with additional needs to be identified and given extra help. All of this, together with the skills and talents of staff and leaders, demonstrates that the school has good capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reinforce the drive for continuous school improvement by:
 - ensuring, through rigorous and effective monitoring, that teaching is consistently good or better

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- ironing out inconsistencies in the progress pupils make in mathematics across the year groups.
- Ensure that information about pupils' progress is used more effectively by producing a concise summary report each term for staff and governors, in order to:
 - provide an improved overview of progress across year groups and subjects
 - help to inform an ongoing review of the impact of teaching strategies in use.
- Ensure that the outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage provides a wider range of continuous opportunities for children to learn through adventurous and investigative play.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' attitudes to school are positive. They show interest in their work in lessons and are responsive learners. They enjoy working with a partner or in a group; this is helping them to develop their thinking and to offer their ideas with growing confidence. Their concentration and study skills are developing well: they listen carefully in lessons and they know that tasks must be seen through to completion. They make good progress through the school and their overall achievement is good. During the last school year, progress in English was good. Progress in mathematics was good overall, but it was uneven across the year groups and some pupils in Key Stage 2 made only satisfactory progress in the subject. Attainment seen in lessons and in pupils' current work is improving rapidly in English; the rate of improvement is a little slower in mathematics. Pupils are eager to do well, however. They know their targets and they want to achieve them. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good, as a result of the good support the school makes for them.

Pupils show a good understanding of issues around healthy living and personal safety. They enjoy taking responsibility as influential school councillors and eco officers. They are enthusiastic fund-raisers for charities at home and abroad. All of this, together with their improving basic skills, contributes to equipping them well for the next stages in their education. Pupils form good relationships with each other and with the adults in school and they say they are confident help is on hand if they encounter any problems. Pupils and parents agree that school is a place of safety. Pupils show a good understanding of the sound moral values the school promotes and this is reflected in their good behaviour and considerate attitudes. Attendance is greatly improved and is now in line with the national average.

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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	3
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	3
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?

Good teaching is contributing well to pupils' learning and progress and to their personal development. Lessons are planned well to take the range of learners' needs into account. A small proportion of teaching seen in the inspection was satisfactory. This was because the pace of learning was too slow and, as a result, some pupils' progress was not as rapid as it could have been. Most lessons move along briskly, however, and this helps pupils to progress well. Use of individual learning targets is helping pupils to understand how well they are doing and marking usually provides them with helpful advice for improvement. Regular assessment means that class teachers have an overview of progress and this is helping them to identify where extra support is needed. Teaching assistants contribute effectively to pupils' learning, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. It is currently satisfactory overall, with good provision for English. Pupils enjoy an increasing number of opportunities to practise and develop their literacy and numeracy skills through work across the areas of learning. This development is at an early stage, although it is starting to impact on raising attainment in the basic skills. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities for pupils to develop skills in sports and music and to learn a modern foreign language. A range of visitors and visits help to promote pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education. Good teaching and support programmes for pupils with special educational

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needs and/or disabilities ensure they enjoy full access to learning and are included in everything on offer.

Pastoral care is good and the school works sensitively to support vulnerable pupils and their families. This is helping to break down barriers to learning and progress that a number of pupils encounter. Strategies to improve attendance have been applied successfully, so that past problems around low attendance figures have now been resolved. Good links with the associated high school benefit pupils at transition. The school collaborates well with a range of agencies that support pupils' health, welfare, social and learning needs.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff and governors share the headteacher's commitment to school improvement and achieving the best possible outcomes for pupils. There is a strong team ethos and middle leaders contribute well to ensuring the good overall quality of provision and to driving improvement initiatives. Improvement targets are set out in the school development plan, with appropriate actions identified for raising attainment and improving progress. The school does not produce succinct summary reports of the reviews of pupils' progress across year groups and subjects that it carries out each term. This restricts the overview of governors and staff and limits the school's ability to review the 'bigger picture' for progress from one term to the next. Although the quality of teaching has improved as a result of regular monitoring, the school is aware that further development is required to make monitoring even more rigorous, in order to eliminate the small residue of satisfactory teaching. The supportive governing body is developing its capacity to hold the school to account.

Parents' views of the school are mostly positive and they are appreciative of all that is done to support their children's welfare. The school is working to ensure an effective partnership with all parents and carers. This is work in progress, although the drive to improve attendance has successfully addressed some persistent absence problems. The school complies well with statutory requirements for safeguarding, health and safety and child protection through well-managed procedures and through ongoing review of their effectiveness. Its inclusive ethos promotes equality of opportunity and access to educational entitlement well. The school contributes well to community cohesion through a range of partnerships and activities in the community, with the church and parish and through its developing international links.

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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	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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children enter the Reception class with low skill levels, especially in their language and mathematical development. They make good progress. By the end of the year, their skills are broadly at expected levels for their age; they have also gained very positive attitudes and become happy, interested learners. The quality of teaching is good and children are provided with a stimulating indoor learning environment. The dedicated outdoor space is restricted to a small hard-surfaced area. An adjacent and attractive grassed and wooded area is not included and this means that opportunities for children to enjoy continuous access to a potentially valuable learning resource are being missed.

There is a good balance of activities between those chosen by the children and those led by adults, and children are thereby supported well in developing the skills that lead to independence. Effective assessment is supported by a wide range of evidence gathered through observations of the children in their activities and staff use this information well to plan the next steps in their learning and to meet their individual needs. The setting is effective in identifying and supporting children with additional learning needs. Children interact well with each other and enjoy warm, trusting relationships with the caring staff; as a result, they grow in confidence, they are happy and secure and ready to learn. They settle quickly because induction procedures are sensitive and the staff forge positive relationships with parents. The setting is well led and managed and the staff team work together well. Provision is monitored regularly and this supports ongoing improvements. Procedures to ensure children's welfare are very good and meet all requirements.

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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

Around one quarter of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Most of those who responded said they agree or strongly agree that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. This is in line with the inspection team's judgement on the school's good overall effectiveness. A small number of parents and a small number of pupils raised concerns about behaviour and the school's management of unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors discussed behaviour issues with a group of parents and with two groups of pupils from across the age range, as well as observing behaviour in lessons and around the school. As a result of these investigations, the team found that pupils' behaviour is good and that it is managed well by the staff.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Clare'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 34 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 127 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	53	15	44	0	0	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	18	53	16	47	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	47	17	50	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	44	17	50	2	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	50	16	47	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	50	14	41	3	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	38	20	59	1	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)	13	38	16	47	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	44	15	44	0	0	2	6
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	41	14	41	4	12	2	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	50	13	38	1	3	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	19	56	13	38	0	0	2	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	19	56	14	41	0	0	1	3

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. 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 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.



20 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Clare's Catholic Primary School, Chester, CH4 8HX

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. As you know, we came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning.

We found that St Clare's is a good school and that it is a happy place for you to learn and grow together. You are well behaved and polite young people. You work hard in your lessons, you enjoy your work and you get on well with each other and with the grown-ups in school. They look after you well. They have been working hard, too, to make sure you are taught well. You are making good progress in your learning and standards are rising. Keep up the good work!

There are still some things to do to help make St Clare's the best school it can possibly be. This is what I have asked the school's leaders to do.

- Keep on improving teaching and make sure that you all make equally good progress in mathematics.
- Improve the way they share information with each other about the progress you are making each term.
- Improve the outdoor area for the children in the Reception class, so that it includes an area with grass and trees as well as the hard surface area.

You can help by continuing to do your best and by continuing to be happy learners.

With my very best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Diane Auton

Lead inspector

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