

St James' Catholic Primary School Orrell

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 106492 |
| Local authority | Wigan |
| Inspection number | 377410 |
| Inspection dates | 19–20 April 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Melvyn Hemmings |

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

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| 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 | 309 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Paul Williams |
| Headteacher | Gary Hayes |
| Date of previous school inspection | 19 March 2007 |
| School address | St James Road Orrell Wigan WN5 7AA |
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Introduction

Inspection team

Melvyn Hemmings
Anthony Buckley
Chris Maloney

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 26 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 13 teachers. Discussions were held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, records of meetings of the governing body, assessment information and curriculum planning. Work in pupils' books and displays around the school were examined. Questionnaires from staff, pupils and from 121 parents and carers were scrutinised. Responses to the on-line Parent View survey were insufficient to inform planning for this inspection.

Information about the school

St James' is larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. Most pupils are of White British Heritage. The school meets the current government floor standards, which set minimum expectations for attainment and progress. It has gained a number of national awards, including the Activemark, and holds Healthy School status.

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 | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 1 |
| Leadership and management | 2 |

Key Findings

- St James' is a good school. Its main strengths are the focused leadership of the headteacher, pupils' achievement, consistently good or better teaching, pupils' excellent behaviour and their high attendance. It is not yet outstanding because the proportion of outstanding teaching is not high enough.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress through the school. Consequently, their attainment is above average in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6, and is particularly strong in reading.
- Teaching has many strengths and there are examples of outstanding practice. Teachers have good subject knowledge and manage classrooms well so pupils remain engaged in their activities. There are, however, limited opportunities for pupils to create their own methods of recording ideas and findings. Marking, in subjects other than English and mathematics, lacks precision in guiding pupils to improve.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils is outstanding. Parents, carers, staff and pupils are very positive about this aspect of the school's work. Pupils show high levels of self-discipline in and around school. They are very polite and considerate to others. Attendance is high. All groups of pupils feel safe in school at all times.
- Morale is high, with all staff and governors sharing the headteacher's ambitious vision for school development. The leadership of teaching and the management of performance are good, and an important factor in the school's success in consolidating and building upon its good performance at the previous inspection. Lesson observations to monitor the quality of teaching by senior leaders sometimes lack sharpness and do not clearly indicate how improvement can be made. The outstanding practice of some teachers is not formally shared with other staff to advance their skills. The curriculum is organised well and provides a wide range of imaginative experiences.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - sharpening the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning
 - sharing the practice of those teachers who consistently deliver outstanding lessons among all teaching staff
 - extending the effective marking evident in English and mathematics to other subjects
 - providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to decide for themselves the best methods of recording their ideas and findings.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils achieve well from their skill level on entering school, which is generally as expected. They make good progress and their attainment is above average in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children work and play well together, taking turns and sharing fairly. They confidently make choices for themselves and enjoy their activities. Through the rest of the school, pupils are keen to learn and show enthusiasm in all they do. They are attentive, maintain concentration for lengthy periods and persevere when faced with difficulties.

Attainment in reading is above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and well above average by the time pupils leave school. The numbers attaining the higher level at the end of Year 6 are exceptional. This stems from the strong emphasis on the teaching of phonics through the school, which enables pupils to make good progress in linking letters and sounds. This was evident when children in Year 1 were learning to identify and say correctly words that had different pronunciations of the letter 'a', such as in 'stamp', 'acorn' and 'wasp'. Such activities contribute positively to their achievement in reading and writing. Pupils enjoy reading and talk knowledgeably about their favourite books and authors. They write imaginatively, using increasingly complex sentences, to express their ideas and feelings. Pupils have well-developed mathematical calculation skills, which they apply well to solve a variety of problems in real-life situations.

In their questionnaires, almost all parents and carers agreed that their children were making good progress at the school. Inspection evidence shows this is an accurate view. There is no significant difference between the achievement and the quality of learning of different groups. This includes boys and girls and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are not. Senior leaders keep a close eye on pupils' rates of progress so that action can be taken if progress slows for any individual. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are given well-targeted extra support to make sure they make the same progress as other pupils.

Quality of teaching

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults work well together to plan activities that are practical and often linked to children's personal experiences. The good balance between activities that are led by adults and those initiated by children makes a positive contribution

to their development as independent learners. Throughout the rest of the school, teachers have good subject knowledge that enables them to explain and demonstrate new ideas clearly and confidently. They provide activities that build upon prior learning so that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are promoted in a systematic manner. Teachers use assessment information well to set work that matches the ability of different groups.

In the best lessons, pupils make rapid progress because imaginative teaching generates high levels of enthusiasm and ensures that pupils' individual needs are met exceptionally well. This was evident in an information and communication technology lesson for pupils in Year 6, in which they were exploring and creating graphical models. Marking is used well in English and mathematics to guide pupils to improve their work. It is not as effective in doing so in other subjects. Teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop independence by deciding for themselves how best to record their ideas and findings. They plan lessons carefully to ensure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are fully involved in all activities. Consequently, they make the same good progress as other pupils. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support pupils' learning.

Pupils' moral development is promoted effectively by teachers' high expectations of pupils' behaviour, ensuring that they have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Social development is encouraged by the many opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively. A good example of this was observed in a physical education lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6, in which they were working in pairs to improve their basketball passing skills. In their questionnaires, almost all parents and carers agreed that their children are taught well at school. Inspection evidence shows this is an accurate view.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

'We love coming to school. Everyone is friendly and kind, children and staff, and we wouldn't change a thing.' This pupil comment is typical of many and reflects their outstanding attitudes to learning and their high attendance. Pupils have high levels of engagement, politeness and cooperation, in and out of lessons. They willingly take on responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council, and, in so doing, enhance the life of the school. The curriculum effectively develops pupils' understanding of how to stay safe, in such areas as road and water safety and in using the internet responsibly. As a result they have a comprehensive understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. Pupils say they feel safe and secure at all times in school. This is exemplified in one pupil's comment, 'We all feel safe in school. It's like a second home.'

Pupils and parents and carers overwhelmingly say that behaviour is excellent and has been over time. Observations in lessons and around school confirm that behaviour is outstanding. Classrooms are very friendly and calm places in which to learn and disruption to learning is rare. This makes a significant contribution to the progress that pupils make. Pupils have a comprehensive understanding of the different kinds of bullying, such as physical, verbal and racist bullying. They say that any such behaviour is rare and, if it happens, staff deal with it promptly. Staff and governors agree that bullying is rare and that strong emphasis is given to quickly addressing any such instances.

Parents and carers particularly appreciate the care taken of their children in school. Two comments are typical, 'We feel particularly pleased with the school ethos of children caring for and respecting each other.' and 'The school is a really positive and supportive environment for children.'

Leadership and management

The headteacher's strong sense of purpose has been central to the school continuing to move forward. Leaders at all levels work well as a team to provide clear educational direction and to motivate staff so they have high expectations of pupils. Teaching has been improved by the provision of good quality professional development, so there are now examples of consistently outstanding practice. However, this practice is not systematically shared amongst other staff in order for them to refine their own skills. Lesson observations are carried out regularly but do not always pinpoint weaknesses in learning or provide teachers with precise areas for improvement. The governing body is supportive of the school and influential in shaping its direction. Self-evaluation is accurate and gives a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The information gained is used effectively to prioritise and plan for further development. The school's track record since the last inspection shows the capacity for further improvement is good.

The arrangements for safeguarding are comprehensive and meet statutory requirements. Training for all staff, particularly for child protection, is of good quality. The promotion of equality of opportunity and tackling of discrimination is good. As a result pupils' outcomes are positive and any unevenness between different groups is minimal. Partnership with others, including the high school, contributes effectively to pupils' good achievement and progress, particularly in music and sport. Leaders successfully promote community cohesion by encouraging pupils to view their role as not only members of the school but to consider their role in the local, national and international community. Engagement with parents and carers is good and ensures they are effectively involved in their children's learning and the work of the school.

A variety of enrichment activities, including well-attended extra-curricular activities, enhance the curriculum. Pupils' skills are extended by visits to places of educational interest, including the Imperial War Museum (North) in Manchester and the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, and opportunities to work with a variety of visitors. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. As a result pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they have a good understanding of the beliefs and values of cultures different to their own. Careful planning ensures that pupils have many opportunities to use their literacy and numeracy skills to support learning across the curriculum.

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 | 54 | 42 | 2 | 2 |
| Primary schools | 14 | 49 | 32 | 6 |
| Secondary schools | 20 | 39 | 34 | 7 |
| Special schools | 33 | 45 | 20 | 3 |
| Pupil referral units | 9 | 55 | 28 | 8 |
| All schools | 16 | 47 | 31 | 6 |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

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| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Attendance: | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance. |
| Behaviour | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Floor standards | the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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: | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. |
| 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. |
| Safety | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning. |

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.



23 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St James' Catholic Primary School Orrell, Wigan WN5 7AA

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave the team when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the many interesting things you do.

The inspectors judge that yours is a good school and that:

- you make good progress and attain above average standards by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics, doing particularly well in reading
- your behaviour is exemplary and you are very enthusiastic about learning
- adults are interested in your views and you feel safe in school, as you indicated in your questionnaires
- you enjoy school as is shown by your high attendance and punctuality
- the curriculum is enriched by a variety of extra-curricular activities and educational visits, such as to the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool
- staff and governors are working hard to help you do even better.

We have asked your school to:

- ensure marking in all subjects is as good as it is in English and mathematics
- provide you with more opportunities to decide for yourselves how to record your ideas and findings
- check more carefully the quality of teaching and share the examples of outstanding teaching among all staff to improve their own expertise.

All of you are a credit to your school and can help it improve further by continuing to try your best in your activities.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings
Lead inspector

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