

St James' Catholic Primary School Orrell

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106492
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	287527
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Delia Hiscock

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 on roll	
School	271
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Seddon
Headteacher	Mr Paul Rigbye
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2001
School address	St James' Road Orrell Wigan Lancashire WN5 7AA
Telephone number	01942 748455
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This popular school serves a busy urban population with few signs of disadvantage. A tiny proportion of pupils take up free school meals. There is a smaller than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including some complex needs. The school is larger than average. Over a period of several years, there have been some changes in the areas from which pupils are drawn. There are a tiny proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritage. The school has gained the award for healthy schools and sports Active Mark and the Basic Skills Quality Mark (BSQM).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. Pupils really like it, they achieve well and attendance is very high. The school forges ahead with a passion and fervour to improve that is evident in its pattern of successes over many years. The excellent pastoral care of pupils is central to its work and their well-being is paramount. This is one of the reasons why pupils mature into confident, sensible and conscientious individuals who value each other's talents and who go out of their way to offer kindness and help. Relationships are excellent, and behaviour is exemplary. These exceptional features contribute to pupils' outstanding personal development and to the qualities they gain that are often beyond their years.

From their broadly average stages of development on entering the Reception Year to the end of Year 6, the pupils make good progress. This includes the pupils from all family heritages and those who have additional difficulties. In the Foundation Stage, the children are provided with a jolly good start. This includes children who start with below average social and communication skills, whose numbers are now greater than in past years. These children often make very good progress. This is why they attain average standards at the end of their Reception Year to be well prepared for Key Stage 1 work. Their robust progress continues in Key Stage 1 and 2, so standards are often above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and have always been at least above average at the end of Key Stage 2. The peaks and troughs of progress in Key Stage 2, caused in part by some unavoidable staffing changes, are boosted by some outstandingly good teaching that harnesses pupils' eagerness to learn. Some exciting approaches and use of information and communication technology (ICT) often pep up the pace and challenge of lessons. This overall good quality of teaching and learning has everyone working very well together to ensure that pupils' needs are met well, though some more skilfully than others.

There are thorough checks on the pupils' progress and lots of professional discussion to deal with any worries a child might bring to school as well as the learning needs. Excellent liaison with external agencies helps to bring this about. The result is often some very well tailored support. Pupils are encouraged to do their best and they are beginning to be guided well in their understanding of how to improve their work. On some occasions, expectations of progress are not high enough. Progress soars where pupils are motivated and engaged in discussing what they have learned. This is how the school's challenging targets set for performance are frequently met.

The exceptional leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher is inspiring and compassionate, and steers the momentum of development by enabling leaders to achieve success, for example, in English. Similar success is on course to be achieved in other subjects. Leadership is well supported by skilful, informed and good governance. In this school, everyone asks: 'How will pupils benefit?' It is also why monitoring and evaluation are effective and why the school has good capacity to move forward. The curriculum is tailored well to pupils' needs and nurtures their understanding of the choices they might encounter in their lives. Richer links across subjects are planned to deepen ideas and skills, and harness pupils' good skills in ICT. The school provides good value for money and has made good improvements since the previous inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good or better.

- Ensure that academic guidance is consistently applied so that all pupils know what it is they need to do to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 2 because pupils achieve well, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children make good progress from average stages of development on entry to their Reception Year. This includes the steadily rising number of children who start with below average social and communication skills. Good progress continues so standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are generally above average. They are often higher in reading and mathematics than in writing. Some exciting recent developments in writing throughout the school are fostering basic skills well. These have yet to pay dividends in standards at the end of Key Stage 2, in particular, but pupils' writing and mathematical work shows that they are currently attaining their potential by the time they are ready to move on to the high school. This is because they have made good progress overall, with some outstanding progress in some classes and in Years 5 and 6, in particular. However, there continues to be some variable progress caused by unavoidable staffing changes. This is part of the reason why the school's national test results in 2006 are lower than the five year pattern of high standards until 2005. The changing profile of the school's intake means that the school's targets for performance are largely met but the school is not complacent. Recent targets have been adjusted upwards for the more able where feasible, and reflect a lower proportion of pupils expected to attain average levels.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils really enjoy coming to school and many say: 'We're all happy here.' They have excellent attitudes in lessons and to everything that the school has to offer. They also say that teachers make their lessons 'interesting and fun'. This is reflected in lots of smiles and peals of laughter about the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. It is seen in the respect that pupils show to others, their exemplary behaviour and the excellent relationships they develop. Their very good awareness of other cultures and heritages makes them outstanding ambassadors for the school, too. Equally, pupils are very involved in decision-making through the school council. They manage their own budget and have a good awareness of the best value by comparing prices for the items such as gardening tools. They suggest, plan and conduct fundraising events with the minimum of adult supervision. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities, showing care and consideration for younger pupils as they act as playtime helpers. They look after the school environment well through the Eco committee's recycling activities and are working towards the Green Flag award. Pupils feel safe in school and understand well the need for regular exercise and a balanced diet as a result of the many sporting activities and healthy lunchtime options. Pupils' good grasp of basic academic skills and their outstanding personal qualities give a prime foundation for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good with some examples of excellent practice, supported valuably by the contribution of teaching assistants. Pupils enjoy most lessons and particularly those where they are actively involved in practical activities and where they use ICT. Where teaching is good or better, pace is brisk, pupils have very good levels of concentration, their behaviour is impeccable and they rise to the challenges presented. They often produce good amounts of work in the time allocated. The new emphasis placed on pupils assessing their own progress is developing well and is providing opportunities for pupils to take some responsibility for their own learning. On occasions though, teachers direct learning activities too much and expectations of presentation and of what pupils can do are not high enough. Nevertheless, the pupils say that: 'We are well prepared and the teachers give us all the skills we need to make a good start at the high school.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs and interests of pupils well and includes good provision for children in the Foundation Stage that features plentiful practical activities indoors and in the fresh air. The quality and breadth of enrichment activities provided by the school are outstanding. They really widen learning experiences, deepen understanding and foster many talents. These activities contribute to pupils' outstanding personal skills and qualities, as does the exceptionally lively arrangements for personal, health and social education, which one pupil said, he would always remember. The school is developing some exciting links between subjects that pupils really enjoy. As one pupil said:

'If you do World War 2 in different subjects, you learn it better.' Pupils' writing develops rapidly overall but some arrangements are overly dominated by worksheets. This limits the opportunities that pupils have to write.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The staff are exceptionally devoted and caring of pupils and this is the reason why pastoral care and support are excellent. Parents agree. The requirements for the care, safety and protection of pupils are in place, including those for child protection and the day-to-day management of this split site provision. Very good support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as it is for vulnerable pupils, to ensure that they are fully included in all that the school provides. Very good links with outside agencies provide more specialist support where needed. Guidance for academic progress is good and features some innovative approaches that are beginning to help pupils to understand how to improve their work but in some instances these are inconsistently applied.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide an excellent lead. Senior leaders have a high profile around the school to support any child in need and any member of staff with advice. This is embodied in the exceptional level of kindness and family centred climate for living and learning. It is subscribed to by all members of this effective leadership team for whom every child really does matter. Some very good systems have been put in place to ensure that pupils' differing and sometimes complex needs are met. Initiatives are used thoughtfully and are effectively evaluated. For example, the dynamic leadership of literacy has triggered huge leaps in the development of pupils' writing and in sustaining this improvement. To bring this about, similar improvements in other areas are to be further developed. Teachers are supported well through professional development training. Provision is strengthened by extensive monitoring and effective governance. Governors are knowledgeable, supportive and able to hold the school to account.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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 behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
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	2
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**

How we enjoyed our visit to your school! We found you all to be really polite and so helpful. It was very interesting listening to what you had to say. We are writing this letter to tell you that we found your school to be a good one. There are some outstandingly good things as well, just as you said.

We agree with you and with your parents too that everyone in the school tries very hard to make sure that you are cared for really well. As you might guess, this helps you to do well in your work. You are right when you said that the school provides lots of clubs, visits and other activities to help you to develop your talents in art, music and sport. These help to keep you fit and healthy.

We found also that that you behave really well, you are kind to others and you work so well with each other. These are important qualities that will help you to do well in life (and you gain lots of important skills too). These are all really important for when you are in the workplaces of the future. You are very thoughtful about the environment because of your Eco work. Well done! As you know, you can make a difference to the world around you for the better. Your school believes that what you have to say is very important and really listens to you. Keep up the good work! To help you, we have asked the school to:

- help you to learn even more quickly
- make sure that you know what you need to do to improve your work.

Look after each other and try to keep yourself and others safe and healthy! We really enjoyed listening to the choir's singing. Perhaps some of you might use your ICT skills and record the best songs and hymns?