



St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111357
Local Authority Cheshire
Inspection number 288937
Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007
Reporting inspector Mark Madeley

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Rossall Grove
School category	Voluntary aided		Little Sutton, Ellesmere Port
Age range of pupils	4–11		Cheshire CH66 1NN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 3396141
Number on roll (school)	182	Fax number	0151 3481340
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev P Phillips
		Headteacher	Mr Robert Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007	Inspection number 288937
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school, formerly known as Pius XII Catholic Primary School, is very popular with the local community. Most children are of White British heritage. About half of the children live close by. The remainder come from as far as Neston in the west and Elton in the east. Very few children are eligible for free school meals. The percentage of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average. Over the last four years the school has planned, and later started erecting a new building on its playing field.

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 an effective school which gives good value for money. Good leadership has maintained the above average standards at the end of Year 6, identified by the last inspection, and has addressed successfully the issues for improvement then raised. The school enjoys a very positive relationship with its parents, support agencies and the health authority, all of which benefit children's personal development considerably. Procedures for the detailed checking of children's progress are good. Subject management has been improved and staff are now effective in raising standards through good action planning. The school's self- evaluation is accurate, except that it was too optimistic in its grades for care, guidance and support and personal development and well-being. The headteacher and governing body have worked very well together to get the new school buildings started and to minimise the disruption building work could have on children's learning. Taking into account the school's successes, it has shown that it has good capacity to improve even further.

Children join the Reception class with the standards expected for their age. They progress well because provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Progress is also good from Year 1 to 6 and children achieve well. Teaching is effective in meeting their needs because staff assess the children thoroughly and plan lessons based on what children know. In the national tests, Year 6 children have reached above average results for the last five years. Children's behaviour is managed well and they are quick to respond to the teachers' signal for quiet. Some teachers use questioning exceptionally well to develop children's understanding of the concept taught and their speaking skills. Children have a thorough understanding of how to improve their work further because teachers' marking is very good. Teaching is good overall. However, there are a few inconsistencies between classes, and the school's monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are not sufficiently sharp to iron these out by enabling teachers to share existing very good practice.

The curriculum is good. The reading programme is very good and leads to children reaching high standards. Recently, more practical work has been introduced into mathematics and science and this is already having a positive impact on children's learning and their enjoyment of lessons. Additional sessions in English and mathematics are used well to improve the basic skills of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children report that they feel very safe and well cared for in school. They say that there is no bullying because 'we are all friends', as one Year 5 child said. They are also very aware of how to stay safe outside of school; for example, the need to avoid alcohol, tobacco and harmful drugs. They like their school very much, as indicated by the consistently above average attendance. Older children look forward to the annual residential visit, where they get good opportunities to develop their teamwork and problem-solving skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in order to extend the very good practice in teaching that will make progress consistently good.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well. They join with average standards and, by the end of Year 6, reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Good teaching in Reception builds effectively on children's experiences and helps them make consistently good progress. The vast majority of children join Year 1 having reached, and in many cases exceeded, the standards expected for their age. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been above average for five years. National assessments in reading have been well above average. Those in writing were slightly lower than usual in 2006 because too few children reached the higher level. The school has put in place initiatives to remedy this. Standards at the end of Year 6 have been above average for the last five years and have improved steadily over that time. Standards in English have been consistently well above average. Those for mathematics have improved over five years, whilst those in science have remained marginally above average. The school has introduced more experimental work into science and this is already having a positive impact on children's understanding. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their individual needs are quickly identified through accurate assessment and additional programmes are put in place to support their learning. The governing body sets the school very demanding targets, which were achieved in 2006. Standards observed in lessons and in children's books are similar to those achieved in the tests in 2006.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Children are keen to learn, behave well and respond quickly to their teachers. For example, they settled very quickly in a Key Stage 2 assembly when the headteacher gave the signal to do so. Children develop self-confidence through good opportunities to speak to adults and other children in class. They are keen to help in their own classroom and around the school. Those with specific responsibilities, like road safety officers and 'buddies', carry them out conscientiously. The school council has been influential in the past but has not met recently because the headteacher has been busy with the new building. Children raise funds for good causes at home and abroad. Their pair and group work in school and on the residential visit develops good initiative and teamwork skills. They also have good basic skills and so are well prepared for their next school. Children have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe on the roads and when using the Internet, and know to avoid the nearby railway. They know how to stay fit and well, though they could drink water more often. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their self-esteem is fostered very well and they get many opportunities to pray and reflect on their thoughts and actions.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and helps children make good progress. A consistently effective aspect is that children recognise that classrooms are places for learning and, as a result, there is a purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Tasks meet the needs of most children and are explained clearly so that children can get started quickly. In addition, lessons are carefully planned and most teachers amend planning for later in the week based on children's learning in earlier lessons. However, there are some inconsistencies between classes. For example, in a few mathematics lessons, all children do the same tasks and this does not sufficiently challenge the more able. Teachers involve all children in recalling previous learning. Some of them question children in greater depth, for instance, frequently asking them to explain their methods; this helps children consolidate their understanding. The pace of learning is brisk in most classes. For example, children enjoyed the 'quick-fire' nature of a task to identify the prime numbers to 50 in Year 6. Support staff are purposely deployed. They are also trained and effectively lead planned additional programmes for those children who need extra help.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of most children well. It is broad, offering all the National Curriculum subjects, religious education and a modern foreign language. The school makes good provision for reading and this enables children to confidently access other areas of the curriculum. The school is doing more problem solving in mathematics and practical work in science and this is improving children's understanding and confidence in these subjects. Management recognises that it could do more to improve children's use of computers and mathematical skills in other subjects. Assessment information is used well to identify the more able children and a programme of music and sport is currently in place to meet their needs. The programme for children's personal, social, health and emotional development is good and makes effective use of the school nurse to supplement the expertise of the staff. The many additional activities are well attended. The school's good provision for physical education and sports clubs has been recognised nationally by the Activemark award.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Procedures for safeguarding children are in place. The overwhelming majority of parents feel that their children are safe and well cared for and the inspection agrees with this view. They are well informed about their children's progress through annual reports and meetings, though a little more detail on their children's attainment would be welcomed by a few. The curriculum information

provided each term is useful to parents, as is the homework diary. There is good consultation between the school, the parents of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the children themselves. This enables the parents and the child to see progress and be involved in the discussion and support of the next steps in learning. All children value teachers' marking, which offers praise and ways they can improve their work. Children have a good understanding of their personal targets and work hard to achieve them. Older children like to assess their understanding of the lesson and teachers use this information to inform future planning. Working parents greatly appreciate the good quality 'before-and after-school' club facility provided by the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, in partnership with the capable deputy headteacher, provides the school with good leadership. He, with the governing body, has managed the process of the new school building very well. Despite potential disruptions such as noise and restrictions to the play areas, the school continues to function smoothly and children reach above average standards. Effective management has improved the checking of children's progress significantly since the last inspection. Procedures are now good and the information is used well. For example, where children's progress is slower than usual, additional programmes are put in place and their impact on standards is checked. Subject coordinators have a good grasp of standards in their subject and have implemented well-thought-out action plans to raise standards further. The reviewing of teaching takes place annually. Feedback offers some support to teachers but because the process lacks regularity and rigour it does not improve the quality of teaching. This means that children's progress is not uniformly good through all classes because the very good practice seen in school is not shared. Governance is good. The governing body keep a close watch on children's progress and the school's finances.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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.

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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We really enjoyed our recent visit to your school because you made us so welcome. You were very confident when speaking to us and we valued your views of the school. Yours is a good school because it helps you make good progress in English, mathematics and science. We agree with you that your headteacher is a very caring man who is doing a good job for you and all the staff. Your teachers are good at planning your work and sharing the questions among you. They encourage you to talk to the class and this is improving your speaking and listening skills. You read well because the skills of reading are taught effectively and most of you play your part by reading regularly at home. You told us that you liked the practical work in mathematics and science and we think that these, along with the foreign language, wonderful visits and clubs, make the curriculum good. We praise you and your teachers because your work showed us that, despite the noise and distractions of the building going on next door, you managed to maintain your concentration and high standards of work.

You are keen to learn and enjoy coming to school. You tell us that you feel very safe and well cared for at school and we agree that all the staff ensure you are well cared for. We saw some of you acting as 'buddies' for the younger children and you were doing a good job. Others who have jobs around the school are usually keen to do them. We think that your school prepares you well for going to the high school.

Even good schools like yours need to continue to improve. We have asked your headteacher to improve the teaching still further by sharing the very good practice we saw in some classes so that you all make the best progress you can. You can help your school improve further by ensuring that you continue to work hard at all your tasks.

Thank you very much for helping us with our inspection. You all made a very good contribution. We hope that you are all proud of what you, the staff, governors and parents have achieved. We wish you all the best for the future and hope that your new school building is all that you and the staff hope for.