

St Julie's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104819
Local Authority	St Helens
Inspection number	308678
Inspection date	18 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Aitken

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	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs C Scott
Headteacher	Mr P Martin
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2004
School address	Brooklands Road Eccleston St Helens Merseyside WA10 5HG
Telephone number	01744 678233
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievement, pupils' personal development and well-being, and the quality of the contribution middle leaders make to the work of the school. The inspector gathered evidence from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes. The school was observed at work, discussions were held with senior members of staff and pupils and the parents' questionnaires were considered. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in similar detail.

Description of the school

This average sized school is situated on the western edge of the town. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Pupils enter the Reception year from several nursery providers. The school has several awards including the National Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark and the Foundation Stage Kitemark Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. On its self-evaluation form, the school judged its performance to be good. This modest appraisal is more accurately a sign of the school's constant striving to improve than a true picture of the outstanding quality of education it provides. Parents feel privileged that their children attend St Julie's and commend especially its dedicated, innovative teachers and the rich curriculum which enables all children to reach their potential.

Standards reached by pupils by the time they leave school in Year 6 are consistently high and the progress they make is excellent. This applies not only to pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science, but also to their success in other subjects such as art, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education. Children make exceptional progress in Reception and their skills and knowledge are mostly well above average when they join Year 1. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, continue to make rapid progress in Key Stage 1, which provides them with a very secure foundation for success in Key Stage 2. In all years standards are high in reading, mathematics and science. Standards in writing are a little lower. In the 2007 national tests nearly all Year 6 pupils gained the expected levels in English, mathematics and science while large numbers achieved the higher Level 5 in all subjects. School data shows that results in the current Year 6 will not be quite as high as usual but this merely reflects the spread of attainment in this particular year group.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils take great enjoyment in their learning because of the excellent care, guidance and support they receive and an outstanding curriculum. The school works tirelessly to provide pupils with an extremely wide range of opportunities which help them develop a broad range of skills and interests. Good examples of these are the high quality of the work produced by pupils in a wide range of ICT applications and the intricate compositions based on the artist Georges Seurat. Pupils reach very high standards in sport, including athletics, where they have won numerous team and individual awards. They have an exceedingly good understanding of healthy lifestyles, as reflected in their national awards. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Creative projects, linked to multicultural theme weeks, reflect pupils' deep knowledge of other cultures and religions. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and they behave well. They carry out an extensive range of duties very responsibly and make equally good use of other opportunities to contribute to the school and the wider community. Examples of these opportunities include the new school newspaper, produced by the very active school councillors, and the effective work of buddies and activity leaders. Pupils' exceptional attendance and the high standards they achieve in basic skills, including ICT, set them up very well for their future lives.

The school has very effective liaison with outside agencies to support pupils with identified needs. Relevant required procedures are in place for child protection, safeguarding pupils and health and safety. Pupils feel safe and confident that someone will listen to them if they are troubled. Transition and teamwork arrangements are very fully and imaginatively developed in all phases and this ensures that pupils transfer smoothly from year to year. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and intensive, skilled support is provided to ensure that they make the same very rapid rate of progress as their classmates. School leaders analyse data very accurately. They use this information very well not only to track pupils' progress closely but also to focus resources and energies into any areas of minor weakness that emerge from time to time. For example, the extra attention given to mathematics this year has been successfully rewarded by a further rise in standards. Targets for pupils' progress, based

on the exceptional standards pupils achieve in Year 2, set high expectations. Nonetheless, pupils regularly meet these very challenging targets.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff are dedicated to doing their best for all pupils and make excellent use of further training to enhance their own subject knowledge and expertise. They manage pupils well and have high expectations for their progress. Lessons are very well planned to meet the needs of all pupils. Methods and resources are imaginative and stimulating and, as a result, lessons are hives of purposeful activity. Pupils respond very well to the challenges posed in these lessons. For example, in a Year 3 physical education lesson the entire class had to keep a ball spinning continuously round the very edge of a giant parachute. Their success in accomplishing this was a tribute not only to their cooperative endeavours but also to their physical skills. Teachers make excellent use of ICT, including the interactive whiteboard, to support pupils' learning. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly, and detailed guidance is provided for the next steps in their learning. Teachers make good use of individual targets to help pupils improve.

A further key factor in the success of the school lies in its outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher and his senior leaders have built up, over several years, tried and tested systems for monitoring and reviewing the work of the school. These are rigorously linked to performance management and ensure a culture of high performance. The headteacher's colleagues follow his example by constantly reviewing their practice and introducing new resources and innovations to develop pupils' skills in all subjects. As a consequence, there is a very clear understanding of the school's many strengths and how to build on these to ensure future success. Governance is also outstanding. Governors are fully involved in the work of the school. They make sure that they have a detailed knowledge of curricular and other priorities to plan very effective actions. The school has outstanding capacity for further improvement and provides excellent value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

When children join Reception, their skills and knowledge are a little above those expected for their age. They flourish in this class and make excellent progress. This is because they receive learning activities which are carefully focused on developing their personal, social and academic qualities. Children are very aware of classroom routines and waste no time in settling to their learning. Resources are plentiful and stimulating. Children are given excellent opportunities to work in pairs and in small groups to pursue their interests and the high quality of their work is evident in classroom displays, for example in their artwork on the theme of 'light and dark'. A strong sense of responsibility to others is evident in the sensible way 'today's helpers' carry out their duties and in the discussion about how they can help the forthcoming new entrants to Reception. Staff are vigilant in ensuring that children's welfare needs are fully catered for. Teaching is highly effective and enables children to understand clearly how well they are learning. Staff use assessment systems exceptionally well, not only to record children's progress, but also to tackle areas for minor improvement in their learning. The Foundation Stage is led and managed exceptionally well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' standards further in writing to ensure high achievement in this skill.

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Annex A

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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Inspection of St Julie's Catholic Primary School, St Helens, WA10 5HG

I am writing to thank you for your help when I visited your school recently and to tell you what I found out. You told me there were many fun things to do in lessons and after-school activities which would help you to do well when you were older. I could understand that from the moment I came into your school and had a good look round your classrooms.

Your school is outstanding. After the excellent start the young children have in the Reception class, your school helps you to make outstanding progress in all your subjects. The standard of your work is high, not only in reading, mathematics and science, but also in other subjects such as art, ICT and physical education. You also make good progress in your writing, but there is scope for a bit more improvement here. Your school keeps a close check on how well all of you are doing in your subjects and provides excellent support for the pupils who need extra help with their learning. Your personal development is excellent. Among your many strong points are your attitudes towards being healthy and active and the ways you get involved in the life of the school, for example as councillors and buddies. Your teachers play their part in your excellent progress by teaching you very well and making sure you work hard. They make sure your learning is not only fun but challenging. They check your work carefully and give you lots of useful tips on how you can improve it.

Staff work very hard to make things better for you and their efforts (and yours!) have been recognised by the awards the school has received in the last few years. They also support you very well in the very many team and individual sporting successes you have every year. Your school continues to be in excellent hands and there is very little that needs improving. I have asked the headteacher, however, to look into ways of raising your writing standards a little, to match your high standards in your other subjects.

You can help by trying your hardest in your writing activities.