

St Philip's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105968
Local Authority	Salford
Inspection number	308998
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2007
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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	381
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Peter Conniffe OSM
Headteacher	Mrs S Slack
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2003
School address	Cavendish Road Salford Lancashire M7 4WP
Telephone number	0161 7924595
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Philip's is a larger than average school, which serves the Catholic community in a residential area in the north of Salford. Its pupils come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. Most pupils are White British and there are a few pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has achieved a number of national awards including Artsmark (Gold), Activemark (Gold) and the Healthy Schools 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 school judged itself to be outstanding. Inspectors and the overwhelming majority of parents endorse this assessment entirely. In the words of parents, 'St Philip's provides an outstanding education with a high standard of teaching, excellent creative and sporting programmes and children who have a strong sense of themselves and their community.'

At its heart lies an unwavering commitment to unlocking the creative potential of all its pupils. It succeeds very well in this, and, consequently, pupils' achievement in their academic work and in their personal and social development is exceptional.

Although this is a big school, it has much of the family atmosphere of a small one. Key to this is the high quality of relationships and mutual respect which result in exemplary attitudes and behaviour. This starts off in the Foundation Stage, where pupils make particularly good progress in their emotional and creative development. Pupils take great enjoyment in their education because outstanding teaching ensures that the work they receive whets their curiosity and challenges them to learn. This factor, combined with a curriculum which places a premium on developing their imagination and creativity, enables them to achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Standards in speaking and listening and in some foundation subjects, such as physical education, are high. The quality of work in art is exceptional. A wide range of supplementary activities enables pupils to develop their talents and gain new skills. The curriculum is well designed to assist pupils in making good choices and decisions with regard to healthy lifestyles and staying safe.

Pupils respond exceptionally well to teachers' high expectations. They comply with instructions with the minimum of fuss and demonstrate high levels of self-discipline. They are confident and articulate because they have many opportunities to develop their oral skills and know that their contributions are valued. Pupils demonstrate their sense of community by readily volunteering to take on a range of tasks and duties, such as playleaders, which they perform very well.

Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and backed up by effective programmes of support. Pupils who need extra help are fully included in lessons, through work which is adapted well for their needs and through the skill of the teaching assistants. The success of these actions is reflected in the excellent progress made by these pupils, similar to that made by other groups. The school makes exceptional use of partnerships with a wide range of organisations to enhance the curriculum, in particular, and the levels of care provided.

The high quality of leadership and management is the last, but not least, piece in the jigsaw that accounts for the school's success. The headteacher's inspirational direction and indelible stamp on the school is best expressed in the distinctive curriculum and the strong team of teachers she has built; these underpin pupils' achievement. She is complemented very well by the other senior leaders, who share in the drive for continuous improvement. The school has progressed well from the very good standards evident at its previous inspection and is very well placed for further improvement. It provides excellent value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage provides an excellent education for the children. On entry to Nursery, children's skills and knowledge are broadly at the level expected nationally for three-year-olds,

but some weaknesses are evident in their emotional, creative and physical development. A well-planned balance of activities, which are adapted well to meet the needs of all children, ensure children catch up quickly in these aspects of their learning, enabling them to make consistently good progress in Reception. Staff use language particularly well to support children's emotional development and promote their independence and self-esteem. As a result, children quickly acquire very good behavioural habits and are courteous and respectful of each other. High expectations and strong input from other adults ensure children receive a very good grounding in the basic skills. By the time the children join Year 1 the vast majority are working securely within the nationally set early learning goals and a significant number are exceeding them. Children's rate of progress is carefully monitored and assessment information is used very effectively to direct support to the children who need it most. Well established links with parents contribute to the progress children make, especially in early reading. The Foundation Stage is very well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- This outstanding school knows itself very well and is already taking the steps it has identified to make it even better. As a result, no issues for improvement are raised.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are above average when pupils join Year 1. Thereafter, pupils build very well on their prior attainment to reach high standards by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science, and in other subjects, most notably, art. Standards are consistently high due to the exceptional quality of teaching and the highly imaginative curriculum. This combination produces an excellent climate for pupils' learning. The school analyses results in national tests effectively to pinpoint and tackle areas of comparative weakness, for example, mathematics. It has succeeded this year in substantially increasing the proportion of Year 6 pupils who achieve the higher level in this subject. Pupils' achievement in English is strong and exceptionally so in speaking and reading. This is due to successful emphases in building up these skills and parental support for their development. Progress is consistently very good throughout the school because teachers have high expectations of what each child should achieve and monitor their progress closely. This enables all groups of pupils, including those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language, to meet or exceed challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This school is full of friendly, respectful and confident children who thoroughly enjoy their education. They concentrate hard in lessons, have a strong curiosity for learning and amply fulfil the high expectations staff have for them. From Nursery to Year 6, pupils work very well together in pairs or small groups to develop their learning. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and the numerous opportunities for self-expression, both orally and creatively, promote their self-esteem. Excellent relationships and a stimulating curriculum result in exceptional behaviour, highly positive attitudes and a strong sense of security. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good, with the development of the first two elements being exemplary. An example of this is the high quality assemblies which fully engage pupils and provide excellent opportunities for them to develop their imaginative powers. Pupils have a detailed appreciation of what it means to stay healthy, as reflected in their very recent national

award. A range of visitors, including the 'Crucial Crew', ensures they are very well aware of how to stay safe. Pupils make a very good contribution to the wider community through their work for charities at home and in Uganda. All these opportunities prepare pupils very well for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Strengths of the teaching in all classes include high expectations for what pupils can achieve, a brisk pace and a wide range of creative teaching styles that promote pupils' independence and confidence. Teachers make very good use of resources, including information and communication technology, to aid learning. They question pupils skilfully to extend their thinking skills. Excellent relationships and teachers' infectious enthusiasm and expertise encourage all pupils to 'have a go'. Practical activities are well adapted to meet the needs of all learners. The quality of pupils' work on display reflects the high standards they achieve and enhances their self-esteem. Pupils are alert, have enquiring minds and learn consistently well. This builds up over time into outstanding progress. Teaching assistants are used very well to ensure that pupils who need extra help get the specialist support they need to enable them to keep up with their learning. Conscientious marking provides effective pointers for pupils to improve their work. Imaginative homework projects enable parents to support their children's learning well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The high quality of the Foundation Stage curriculum lays a very solid base for pupils' future learning. The impact of the broad and rich curriculum for pupils in the infant and junior classes is reflected in pupils' outstanding progress in their academic work and personal development. Good examples of the stimulating creative curriculum are seen in the promotion of writing skills through work in other subjects and very high standards in art. This is clearly demonstrated in the displays of pupils' work on the theme of Monet's garden. The curriculum ensures that all groups of pupils, including the gifted and talented, make exceptional progress. Less common activities, for example, fencing, enable pupils to learn new skills and boost their self-awareness. Strong links with outside organisations, such as Creative Partnerships, enable pupils to reach high standards in their artistic and musical endeavours. Expert sports' coaching, which includes outstanding dance sessions, makes an excellent contribution to pupils' physical development and enjoyment of learning. Specialist teaching in French and Spanish adds further 'spice' to pupils' learning. The school's highly successful approach to practical learning experiences is typified by a recent production of a film about the Second World War made by Year 6 pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school cares very well for its pupils. This is evident in their happy and welcoming manner and in the pupils' view that they are entirely safe in school. Child protection and other arrangements for safeguarding children are properly in place. Health and safety and other welfare systems are managed well. Staff are extremely effective in ensuring that pupils' relationships are characterised by high levels of courtesy and respect. Very good support for

those pupils who need extra help is firmly grounded in detailed strategies that enable them to achieve very well. Targets in individual education plans are used very effectively to ensure both staff and pupils have a very clear idea of how well pupils are progressing. Teachers analyse work carefully to monitor pupils' levels of attainment. Their progress is promoted by good tracking systems and supported by challenging targets. Very strong links with support agencies, parents and the wider parish community underpin pupils' very good achievement. Excellent transition arrangements ensure pupils are very well prepared for each stage in their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher and other senior leaders direct the work of the school exceptionally well. The strong vision of the headteacher, which is reflected in the imaginative curriculum, permeates the work of the school. This vision and commitment are shared by all staff, who work very well to make the curriculum such a success for the pupils. Expectations of performance are high for staff and pupils alike. These expectations are fully met and reflected in the strong outcomes. Performance management, linked to challenging targets, underpins the strong sense of accountability and very good teamwork amongst the staff. The latter are skilled practitioners, who constantly seek to take 'that next step' to further develop the high quality of education provided. The subject expertise of staff, supplemented by that of outside specialists, is deployed well to boost standards and enhance the curriculum in all years. School leaders are very well aware of the strengths and have a clear understanding of the areas where further small improvements can be made. The governors are well informed and are very effective in their roles as decision-makers and 'critical friends'.

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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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

My colleagues and I visited your school recently to find out how well you were learning. Thank you for making us feel welcome and being so helpful when we asked you questions. We were really impressed, not only by how keen you were to speak but also by how well you spoke. I was lucky to have the opportunity to speak to you for longer. You told me how much you enjoyed school and the reasons for this were perfectly clear to us during our visit. Among the many highlights for me was the infants' assembly with its imaginative variety, mystery and wonder. The younger pupils took a really excellent part in it. It summed up so many things that are really good about your school, which we judge to be outstanding in all parts of its work. Let me pick out four things.

- The excellent relationships which we saw in classrooms, in the playground and in the assembly.
- The very good teaching which helps you reach high standards and make very good progress in your work. Your art work is absolutely stunning.
- The exciting curriculum which gives you so many opportunities to develop not only your basic skills but also to explore your creative sides and brain-power in music, art and dance - not to mention fencing and chess.
- Of course these things do not happen automatically. You are fortunate that the staff work so well together under a headteacher who inspires them - and you too - to give of their best and who are constantly trying out new approaches to make your learning even better.

We are sure you will continue to help them make these good things happen.