

# The Willows Catholic Primary School, Kirkham

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119626
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	313362
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Angela Milner HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	161
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Ray Cumpstey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Peter Croft
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 June 2004
<b>School address</b>	Victoria Road Kirkham Preston Lancashire PR4 2BT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01772 684371
<b>Fax number</b>	01772 684371

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The Willows is a smaller than average primary school. Social and economic indicators vary within the area served by the school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average but a higher than average proportion of these pupils have a statement of special educational need. Compared with other primary schools, more pupils join the school at a later stage than Reception. Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage.

The school has the Healthy Schools Award and the Learning Excellence Award for Modern Foreign Languages.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The Willows Catholic Primary school is a good school which provides outstanding pastoral care and support. It provides a safe, inclusive and attractive learning environment. Pupils flourish in a happy, family, community atmosphere based on mutual respect and excellent relationships. Every member of the staff team is committed to giving the pupils the best possible education and care. Pupils enjoy, appreciate and benefit from what the school has to offer. Parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive in their views of all aspects of the school. They particularly value the good education it provides and the approachability and sensitivity of the staff. As one parent said, this is 'a warm and friendly school that really nurtures children'. The inspectors agree.

Pupils make good progress from their initial starting points and achieve well. They get off to a good start in the Reception year and, by the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are above the national average. The school sets itself challenging targets and its records show that all groups of pupils are on track to reach them.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils develop positive values because they are respected and treated as individuals. Attendance rates are good in comparison with similar schools. Pupils' behaviour is good both in and out of lessons. They enjoy school and make an excellent contribution to the life of the community. They understand how to lead healthy lifestyles and make good use of the outdoor facilities and the many sporting opportunities that are available. Pupils develop into mature, responsible young people, confident about entering the next stage of their education.

The majority of teaching is good and a small proportion is outstanding. Good features of the teaching include the positive relationships teachers have with their pupils; the very good use of the interactive whiteboards to motivate learners and the way learning is planned to ensure it meets pupils' needs. Teaching mostly provides appropriate challenge, but the most able pupils are not always sufficiently stretched to attain the highest standards they can. Work is regularly marked but there is some variation in the quality of marking. Pupils are not always clear about the standards reached and the steps that need to be taken to improve their work.

The curriculum provided is good. It is broad and well matched to pupils' different interests, whilst providing a clear focus on developing their basic skills. The school provides a very good range of activities beyond lessons which contribute to pupils' personal development and well-being. These activities are well attended and enjoyed by pupils.

The senior staff provide good leadership and management of the school. They have successfully promoted a positive ethos, a real sense of community and good relationships amongst staff and pupils. The governors are involved in the school and very supportive of its work. They have a wide range of skills and experience to offer the school which makes good use of their expertise. Systematic self-evaluation and increasingly effective use of data mean the school can identify its strengths and the areas it needs to improve. All areas identified for improvement in the last inspection have been addressed and the school clearly demonstrates good capacity to make further improvements.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is good. Pupils enter Reception with skills that are typical for their age. Thorough induction arrangements and effective liaison with parents ensure that children settle quickly into the Reception class. Well structured activities, caring relationships and good quality provision for care and education ensure that children make good progress in all areas of their learning. The vast majority of pupils reach the standard expected for their age and a good proportion exceed it. Structured learning activities give pupils the basic skills in early reading, writing, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and provide a good start to school. Children develop self-esteem, confidence and independence and learn to be creative. Children develop their social skills and work and play well together. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is developed through first hand and play experiences. The attractive indoor and outdoor learning environment is used well to support learning and to celebrate achievement. Children's personal, social and emotional development is a particular strength. They are happy to share their thoughts and feelings, participate in class worship and make a positive contribution to their community. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Assessment is detailed and is used to monitor children's development and achievement. Clear targets are set for the next steps in their learning. Very detailed assessment information is provided for parents.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more challenge for the most able pupils to enable them to achieve higher standards.
- Make marking and feedback more consistent to ensure it indicates the standards reached and the steps that need to be taken to improve.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good. In 2007 standards at the end of Key Stage 1 were above average in mathematics, reading and writing. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have varied over the last three years. Standards improved to above the national average in 2007 after a dip in results in 2006. School data shows that this improving trend has been maintained in 2008.

Progress made by pupils has varied over the last three years. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are currently making good progress given their starting points. Underachievement is identified and steps are taken to address it through the use of appropriate intervention strategies including the current focus on boys' writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress. The school is aware of the need to focus on ensuring more able pupils achieve as well as they can.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are very friendly and polite and form good relationships with adults and with each other. Almost all have positive attitudes to learning, underpinned by good behaviour which reflects their understanding of the agreed code of conduct. Serious misbehaviour and bullying are extremely rare and the number of exclusions is very low. Pupils

enjoy all the school has to offer and participate well in additional activities. Attendance is above average. Pupils say they feel safe in school and are confident that their concerns will be listened to. Their concerns for the well-being of others and the way they conduct themselves safely, for example in using playground equipment, are outstanding. Pupils show a good awareness of the importance of exercise and nutrition in the way they use the good facilities the school provides for physical activity and healthy eating. They enjoy helping others and make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. They are, for example particularly active in raising funds to support charities such as Cafod and to buy equipment for the school. They are rightly proud of the work of the school council in improving the school's outdoor environment. Their good basic skills prepare them for the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. In all lessons teachers set clear learning objectives for pupils and provide varied and stimulating tasks. Teachers are knowledgeable, their explanations are clear and they use varied resources, including interactive whiteboards, to engage their pupils' interest. Teachers know their pupils well and set work which is mostly challenging and well matched to needs, though the most able are not always sufficiently stretched. Teachers' use of encouragement and praise helps develop the positive relationships which underpin effective learning. As the lesson progresses, they continually check pupils' understanding. Teachers and teaching assistants give those pupils who need extra help invaluable individual support which successfully boosts their learning. The very best lessons are characterised by an excellent ethos for learning. For example, classroom wall displays become an integral part of the lesson and there are many opportunities for pupils to share, discuss and evaluate their own and others' work. The positive attitudes, hard work and good behaviour of the vast majority of pupils are important factors in their good achievement.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. The strong programme for personal, social and health education promotes pupils' personal development. There is a good range of well attended after-school clubs and activities that contribute well to a healthy lifestyle and pupils' enjoyment of school. Educational visits and visitors to the school broaden pupils' horizons and enhance the curriculum. Imaginative use is made of ICT. The local area is particularly well used as a resource. There is a suitable emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT in relevant contexts across the curriculum. The curriculum is increasingly structured around the study of cross-curricular topics and themes, thus enabling pupils to develop subject-specific learning skills and an understanding of the links between subjects. There are opportunities for them to apply these skills in problem-solving and investigative activities. Whilst this strategy has clearly improved levels of enjoyment and motivation, the impact on the end of Key Stage 2 results cannot yet be measured. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

The pastoral care and support provided by the school is outstanding. The atmosphere for working and learning is calm and supportive. There is a strong commitment to providing for pupils' welfare and the school provides a very safe environment. Procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety are given high priority. Risk assessments are managed well for visits and for school activities. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. Child protection strategies are well managed and pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe. Academic guidance is less well developed. Pupils do not always know or understand their targets. Marking does not consistently indicate the standard of pupils' work or the steps needed to improve. Very close monitoring and sensitive support enables pupils who require additional help to make good progress. Systems for tracking pupils' progress identify those at risk of underachievement and trigger additional support. Regular and informative reports are sent to parents. Very good links with the local high school ease the transition of Year 6 pupils..

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. It is led and managed by a leadership team who provide a clear vision for the school. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and its development plan has appropriate priorities for improvement. Middle leaders, such as subject leaders and the Foundation Stage coordinator, play an active part in evaluation and in shaping school policies and developments. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This is based on the analysis of data, lesson observations and surveys of pupils and parents. Parents are kept well informed of school events and their children's progress. Staff work tirelessly, as part of a harmonious team, to provide good quality education and high quality care. Governors have a detailed knowledge of the school; provide good support and appropriate challenge. Financial management is sound and resources are effectively deployed. The school has clear policies and procedures in relation to equality and discrimination.

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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?	2
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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**

26 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Willows Catholic Primary School, Kirkham, Lancashire, PR4 2DB

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and visiting you at work and at play. We saw a lot of happy children who get along well with all of the adults in school and with each other. You enjoy school and make good progress in your learning because of the good teaching you receive. Many of you get involved in the wide range of opportunities the school has to offer. We were impressed by your politeness, helpfulness and your positive attitudes to learning and by the way in which you have worked to improve the outdoor environment. It was clear to us that you were all proud of being part of The Willows community. Many of your parents completed questionnaires. This meant we were able to consider their views during the inspection.

We judged the school to be good in everything it does. It does some things extremely well, such as providing high quality care and support for you. The staff and governors work hard to ensure the school runs well and continues to improve.

We have asked your school to look at two things to make it even better.

- Increase the number of pupils who reach a high standard for their age by making sure work is challenging enough.
- When the teachers mark your work, they could tell you more about how well you are doing and how you could do better next time.

You can all of course help to improve your school by continuing to attend regularly, work as hard as you can to achieve your best and by playing your part in continuing to improve the school through the work of the school council.

Best wishes for the future.

Angela Milner

Her Majesty's Inspector