



Holy Family RC Primary School, New Springs, Wigan

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106491
Local Authority Wigan
Inspection number 287526
Inspection date 13 September 2006
Reporting inspector Suzi Clipson-Boyles HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Longfield Street
School category	Voluntary aided		New Springs, Wigan
Age range of pupils	4-11		Lancashire WN2 1EL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01942 246376
Number on roll (school)	122	Fax number	01942 246376
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Miss Agatha Brown
		Headteacher	Mrs Julie McDonald
Date of previous school inspection	27 November 2001		

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school situated between town and country to the north east of Wigan. The children come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The number of children entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. Nearly all children are of White British heritage. There is a higher proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, than is usual in most schools.

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 and children love coming here. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the way staff successfully promote their children's personal development and learning. They also feel confident that their children are well cared for. This is an inclusive school. Everyone is given an equal opportunity to succeed and the views of each individual are valued. Children and adults alike strive to improve and everyone knows they will be supported in their efforts. There is a happy atmosphere, underpinned by a strong Catholic ethos. Children work hard and enjoy school. Attendance is slightly above the national average.

The success of the school is rooted in its excellent leadership and management. The headteacher inspires everyone and has built a strong and positive staff team. Children, staff, governors and parents each play an important part in the school's development. Governors provide good support and challenge for the school's management. The senior staff know the school's strengths and areas for improvement well and keep a close eye on children's performance. Changes are made only when needed and they are carefully checked to see if they are effective. The school has a strong track record of continuous improvement and the capacity for further improvement is excellent.

Children's achievement is outstanding and standards are high. All groups of children are set challenging targets in relation to their abilities and starting points. Children assess their own progress regularly with their teachers who then plan the next steps accurately. This process starts in Reception and continues right through the school. It is an important factor in the consistently good progress children make as they move up through the school. The overall starting point in Reception is broadly in line with the national expectation, but by the end of Year 6, standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science. In other subjects, good standards are evident in the work children produce. In physical education (PE) and in art, standards are very high.

The school provides children with a top-quality curriculum that is varied and well balanced. The way in which visits, visitors and other special events enrich children's learning is an outstanding feature. Children talk excitedly about this and how it helps them to learn. The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers assess children's work thoroughly, although they do not always have as a clear measure of how children are performing in history and geography. Children's behaviour is excellent and they are considerate of the needs of others. The school prepares them well for adulthood by providing many opportunities for them to take on responsibilities and put their ideas into action. The school does more than is expected and more to ensure that children are safe. Children talk knowledgably about how to stay safe and healthy. They also practise what they have learned, choosing healthy food at lunchtimes and taking part in many sporting activities. They contribute to the wider community, for example, by keeping pavements litter-free, and they work for the wider world, raising significant sums of money for many charities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Track more closely pupils' progress in history and geography.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The range of children's abilities is very wide at the start of Reception but overall standards are broadly in line with expectations. They make significant gains during that year. By the end of Year 2 standards have risen to above average in the national tests for English and mathematics. Year 6 children consistently reach standards that are well above average and science results are especially high, within the top 15% of schools nationally in 2005. Standards are also very high in art and PE. Work in most other subjects is good. Where specific groups of children display different levels of achievement, for example when boys in particular year groups have underachieved, the school takes swift action, usually with effective results. Recent evidence shows that looked-after children have made exceptionally good progress in this school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding. Children behave very well: they are courteous, respectful and have mature attitudes. There is very little bullying and, on the rare occasions that there is an incident, children are confident that it will be dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff. Even the very youngest children take their responsibilities seriously; for example, in helping to tidy up. Year 1 children helped Reception children with a measuring task, which was in turn helping them develop their communication and social skills. Year 6 children act as play leaders to younger children at lunchtime. The training they receive for this from the local authority sports adviser is excellent preparation for the world of work. Attitudes towards school are excellent and children are enthusiastic about learning. They are regularly expected to take the initiative and make positive contributions to school life and the community; for example, in designing and costing the new library area, in planning a garden that is environmentally friendly to wildlife, and in taking responsibility for composting the school's waste. The school recently came top in a recycling competition for schools in the local authority. Children regularly plan and take assemblies and the school council consults and acts on new ideas, such as reintroducing daily milk. The excellent way they take on these roles is facilitated by the way their teachers value their contributions and support them in developing the skills to put ideas into practice. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are excellent.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is outstanding. As a result, children enjoy learning and make very good progress. Teachers work hard to make the learning challenging and fun. In an art lesson, Year 1 and Year 2 children produced self portraits of an exceptionally high quality as a direct consequence of the quality of the teacher's introduction. She also challenged each individual do just 'a little bit more', which meant that their paintings became even better. Children work well together and independently. Recent learning about developing 'thinking skills' was evident in a Year 3/4 history lesson where children were planning what they needed to find out about the Romans. All children take an active part in assessing their own work which helps them understand what to do next without being fearful. They know that there is always help at hand from teachers if they don't understand and from well trained and effective teaching assistants who move children's learning forward. The school also employs specialist teachers who make a significant difference to progress for specific children. Displays of children's work of high quality add to the stimulating and orderly learning environment.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Teachers provide a curriculum that is broad, balanced and rich. They use an outstanding range of approaches to make learning interesting and exciting. For example, children clearly understood what it felt like to be a Victorian school child as a result of their trip to a heritage centre at Wigan Pier. Workshops in a local authority art gallery have had a very positive impact as demonstrated by the stunning art work on display around the school. Such experiences and others, like the visit to the local canal and the Year 6 annual residential field trip to Duddon Valley in the Lake District, have a lasting effect on the children's learning. Likewise, visitors coming into school such as 'the Bugman' who delights children with his creatures, help bring lessons alive. The school provides a good range of lunchtime and after-school clubs. The many sports on offer are popular and help children to learn how to stay healthy as well as have fun. The local authority award for Excellence in the Early Years is well deserved. A wide range of activities in a well organised and stimulating environment encourages the youngest children to make independent choices and motivates them to learn.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The commitment of staff to children's care, guidance and support is a distinctive feature of the school. Care, guidance and support are exemplary and the ethos of the school is uplifting. Arrangements for safeguarding children comply with government regulations and are regularly reviewed. Children feel safe at school and are therefore able to focus on their work. The support for their academic progress is excellent. Adults

are always there to help and the children are also encouraged to take responsibility for the progress they make. The headteacher holds regular reviews with every teacher and changes to activities are made if a child is not succeeding. This means that all children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, receive appropriate support to ensure consistently good progress. The school works well with parents who gave unanimous support for the school's work in their questionnaires returned to the inspector. Children with a special gift or talent are given opportunities to excel; for example, dancers who performed at the school's 'Musical Extravaganza'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. She has very high expectations of everyone in their work, behaviour and relationships. The school is a place where people are proud of their achievements and where they want to do even better. The senior staff provide very good support for the headteacher and work effectively as a senior leadership team, communicating a clear vision and focus to other staff. Governors play an active role in challenging and supporting the senior leadership team and children enjoy the regular visits to their classroom by the chair of the governing body. All staff are involved in leading and managing the curriculum and there is very good communication between them about children's progress in different subjects. The teacher responsible for leading on literacy brings great expertise to the school. The quality of children's writing is improving as a result of projects she is leading, such as 'The Big Write'. Evaluation and planning for school improvement are the result of whole staff involvement. New initiatives are introduced only after careful consideration and are regularly reviewed to check that they are working. Such changes have led to more effective teaching and learning. For example, since the children have been more involved in assessment, teachers have noticed that they are much more focused on their learning. Children and parents are consulted widely and their input is regularly acted upon.

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

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

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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	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

Thank you very much indeed for giving me such a warm welcome when I came to inspect your school. It was such a joy to spend the day with you because there was such a happy, hard-working atmosphere in the school. Mrs McDonald and the teachers think your school is good but I think it is excellent! Here are some of the things that make your school very special.

- You all work so hard that you get better and better every year.
- All the visits (like to Wigan Pier) and visitors (like the Bugman) help to make the learning more interesting for you.
- You get very high results in your tests.
- You are especially good at science and PE.
- I loved all the excellent art work on display around the school.
- I was very impressed with your behaviour. I especially liked the way you all look after each other.
- Mrs McDonald and the teachers and governors are very good at deciding on new ideas that will help make the school even better.
- You are very good at making decisions and taking responsibility for things. I think this will help you when you are grown up.
- You have a great choice of food and you know why it is important to make healthy choices. I enjoyed my healthy hotpot at lunchtime. You also do lots of healthy sport.

Some of you told me that you would like to learn more about history and geography. The teachers agree that this would be a good thing to look at more closely in the next year. I am sure you will all work really well on that together. I do wish you all a very happy and successful future and hope that Holy Family Roman Catholic Primary School continues to be such a wonderful place for you to learn and have fun.