



St Oswald's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111369
LEA Warrington
Inspection number 278670
Inspection dates 23 January 2006 to 24 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Margot D'Arcy CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Padgate Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Padgate
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Warrington, Cheshire WA1 3LB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01925 813015
Number on roll	187	Fax number	01925 820545
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Mike Whitfield
Date of previous inspection	27 November 2000	Headteacher	Ms Helen Lennon

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is situated in Padgate, on the outskirts of Warrington in Cheshire. The area is broadly average in socio-economic terms. Virtually all children are of white British background and all speak English as their first language. There are 19% of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is around average. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals is below average. The school has been successful in attaining a healthy schools award, the Sport England Active Gold Mark, Investors in People and a number of government achievement awards.

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; a judgement that is somewhat more favourable than the school's own modest evaluation of 'good'. By the end of Year 6 children have made excellent progress and attained well above average standards. Children in the Foundation Stage are well provided for and make good progress. Teaching and learning are good with some outstanding teaching at Key Stage 2. The children benefit from an outstandingly rich curriculum that ensures all are included and enabled to reach their potential. The level of care for all children is outstanding. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported very effectively and achieve as well as others. Children exhibit very positive attitudes and behaviour in class and around the school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Strong relationships exist with parents who hold the school in very high regard.

The headteacher's outstanding leadership provides a clear focus on high quality care and education for all children. She is supported very well by other managers and governors. There are rigorous systems to monitor the school's work so that the right priorities for improvement are identified. Well thought-out action is taken to secure improvement but, occasionally, action plans within the school's improvement plan are not sharp enough in identifying how the success of this work will be measured. There have been many improvements since the last inspection and the school is very well placed to improve even further. The school provides outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the success criteria in all action plans are sharp enough to allow the school to clearly measure the impact of the action taken to secure improvements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children's achievement is outstanding. From a broadly average starting point on entry to the school, children meet very challenging targets. By the end of Year 6 they consistently attain standards that are well above average in English, mathematics and science. The fall in the most recent test results for Year 2 children reflect an unusually high number of children in the year group with learning difficulties.

Over the last four years, standards by the end of Year 2 have generally ranged from above to well above average in reading and writing and have been broadly average in mathematics. In recent years staffing disruptions in all infant classes have had some limiting impact on children's progress. Overall, this has been well compensated for by good teaching and additional support programmes, which have enabled pupils to make good progress overall in reading and writing. Whilst mathematics standards have improved since the last inspection, the rate of progress, although satisfactory, is not as good as in reading and writing. Staffing disruptions have had a bigger impact here, with investments in training and development being lost as staff have left. Significant

strengths in mathematics teaching are now evident, demonstrating the success of the school's drive to address this disparity in progress. School data and inspection evidence indicate that standards in mathematics at Key Stage 1 are set to rise.

Reception children make good progress. Over time, there has been some variation in the standard attained by the end of the year but last year's group reached standards that were above those expected for children of this age.

Progress during Years 3 to 6 is impressive and results from teaching that is consistently good or better. Children make rapid gains across a wide range of subjects, including information and communication technology (ICT), the arts and physical education. Across the school, children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve at the same rate as others. Over time, boys and girls do equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school meets with outstanding success here. A strong Christian ethos pervades all aspects of its work and impacts very positively on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are excellent opportunities for children to develop self knowledge through reflection, for example, during assemblies, art and music lessons. They have a clear understanding of what is acceptable behaviour and how to treat each other. Children are learning to respect different cultures through religious education lessons and, for example, performing alongside an African choir. Children's great enjoyment of school is obvious in the enthusiasm for learning seen in lessons and other activities. Pupils in Year 6 were so engrossed in their science investigation that they elected to carry on at lunchtime. These highly positive attitudes are strongly supported by attendance figures that are consistently above the national average. Children are hardworking and responsible. The school council gives them a voice in decision making and members are pleased with the changes that they have initiated to the playgrounds.

Older children are very aware of the school's expectation that they set a good example to the younger ones. They say that they feel safe in school, where they assert 'there is no bullying because we're all friends here'. Children are very aware of the need to keep healthy and explain much about healthy foods, the importance of exercise and the dangers of the sun. Children's contribution to the community includes participation in parish activities, entertaining local people and organising charitable events. The standards achieved in this area ensure that children develop into well rounded individuals, ably prepared for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good with some outstanding features. In the Foundation Stage, work is based firmly on the teaching staff's secure understanding of how young children learn and gives children a good start to their education.

In the most effective lessons there is a high level of challenge for all children, with very good support for those who find learning more difficult. Thus all children achieve success and thoroughly enjoy their learning. Children's enjoyment underpins the planning of many lessons with numerous activities to grab their interest and motivate them, such as drama to support historical understanding and to stimulate a writing task for homework. Year 6 children's assertion that they really enjoy their nightly homework is testament to the creative way that learning is planned. Opportunities for children to show initiative and to work collaboratively are much improved since the last inspection. In many lessons teachers' very good subject knowledge is evident in their explanations and questioning. The involvement of many children in answering questions and explaining strategies supports teachers' rigorous assessments which are used to plan the next stage of learning. In lessons that are less effective, though not inadequate, there are a few limitations in challenging higher attainers through questioning and tasks. In all lessons, teachers make good use of electronic whiteboards, which helps motivate children and maintain their attention. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and given very good support. Teaching assistants make a particularly good contribution to the learning of this group.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

An outstanding curriculum is provided. Strong emphasis is placed upon ensuring that children are well equipped with the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, thereby supporting their future economic well-being very effectively. The promotion of children's creativity has a high profile and is seen in the varied and rich opportunities children have to engage in poetry, drama, music and physical education, with the latter reinforcing benefits of exercise to stay fit and healthy. A wide range of enrichment activities incorporate visits to places of interest and many clubs for both infants and juniors. Pupils say they particularly enjoy singing in the school choir and the coaching sessions provided by a local rugby club. The school's partnership with an international communications company provides regular classroom support by company staff in a school and business link project. Carefully planned work programmes are devised for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school is developing good links with a variety of institutions to extend learning opportunities for gifted and/or talented children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides exceptional care, guidance and support for children. The very good knowledge staff have of children as individuals is backed up by clear policies and procedures. These are highly effective in addressing key areas such as risk assessment and health and safety. There are well established procedures for child protection; staff have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities to protect children and are particularly vigilant in their support for vulnerable children. Where necessary the school involves and works closely with outside agencies. Very effective assessment procedures result in children being set clear improvement targets against which progress is rigorously tracked. This is helping the school to address the progress issue in mathematics at Key Stage 1. Children say that they appreciate the regular feedback about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Children are taught how to stay safe and be healthy. Parents expressed their appreciation for the way the school cares for their children with 'a family atmosphere' being quoted by many. They also welcome the opportunities to learn about the school's curriculum so that they can support their children's learning at home and in class.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. Children's academic and personal progress and well-being are at the heart of all that is done and are reflected in the high standards and very effective provision. The headteacher's clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses is openly communicated to senior management, other staff and governors so that all are working towards the same goals. The headteacher's success is underpinned by her excellent management of people, which has been enhanced by her regular liaison with business managers of an international communications company. She is an excellent teacher who leads by example, providing role-model training and support for staff across the school. The governors' appointment of a personal assistant to the headteacher, to support this work and ensure that the head can carry out rigorous monitoring, is working well.

Staff, governors, children and their parents are regularly consulted and involved in the school's work. Their views are taken account of in the highly effective self-evaluation procedures. These lead to the identification of appropriate improvement priorities and focused action to secure these. The school's improvement plan is a useful tool to support change but occasionally the criteria against which the school will measure the success of any action taken are not specific enough.

Governors are very supportive and involved, for example, through links with subject teams and classes. They challenge the school well and reflect thoroughly on spending decisions to ensure best value is achieved. A good example is the decision to ensure a trained teacher covers teachers' professional development time away from their classes. The school's continual drive to improve is reflected in the many good

improvements that have been made since the last inspection. As such it has outstanding capacity to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and being so polite and friendly. We enjoyed our visit and want to share with you what we thought about your school.

What we liked most

- Your headteacher wants the best for you all and works extremely hard to ensure that you enjoy school and achieve well.
- Your teachers also work very hard to plan interesting and exciting lessons. They tell you what you are good at and how to do better and give you good tips on how to be good learners.
- You put lots of effort into your learning, which shows how much you enjoy school. Your hard work pays off and you achieve very good results.
- You are sensible when you work together. You are kind and helpful to each other and think about how you can help people in your community and the wider world.
- Your school provides a great range of things for you to participate in outside of lessons and teaches you how to stay safe and keep healthy.
- The headteacher, staff and governors make sure that they do everything possible to take care of you and make you feel safe.

What we have asked your school to do now

- We want the school to make a few changes to the way they write down how they will check to see if all of their hard work has been successful.

We appreciated talking to you about your work and watching you learn, we wish you well for the future.