

St Philip's C of E Primary School, Atherton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106515
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	324418
Inspection date	15 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Mr Mike Hewlett

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	236
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Glennon
Headteacher	Mrs G Burrow
Date of previous school inspection	July 2006
School address	Bolton Old Road Atherton M46 9FD
Telephone number	01942 883919
Fax number	01942 876145

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); standards and achievement; pupils' personal development and well-being; the care, guidance and support provided by the school; and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's own self-evaluation and a range of documents; meetings with staff, pupils and the chair of governors; the findings of parental questionnaires; scrutiny of books; and observations of the school at work. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This average-sized primary school draws its pupils from a wide geographical area and pupils come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The EYFS comprises one Reception class. The school has a number of national awards including Excellence in Work Related Learning, Investors in People and the Basic Skills Award. It is also an accredited Eco School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Philip's is an outstanding school in which pupils consistently achieve exceptionally high standards and make excellent progress. Parents have great confidence in the school. Typical comments include, 'My son enjoys school and has made excellent progress.'

Pupils' skills on entry to the EYFS vary from year to year but are broadly typical for their age. In recent years there has been a dip in their speaking and listening skills on entry, which are now below average. They leave at the end of Year 6 with exceptionally high standards in English, mathematics and science and over half of Year 6 pupils consistently reach the highest level in English and science. Both the 2007 and provisional 2008 Key Stage 2 national test results show that standards were exceptionally high and pupils' achievement was outstanding. Inspection evidence paints a similarly positive picture. Achievement in Key Stage 1 is also outstanding with pupils making excellent progress from where they started in Reception. Standards are more variable in this key stage and reflect the make up of the different year groups. Nevertheless, in most years standards are above average. Although standards in English are high, pupils' performance in writing is generally weaker than in reading. This is because more children are arriving in school with poorer literacy skills and a limited vocabulary. It is an area that the school is tackling successfully by placing a greater emphasis on writing skills, including writing through role play. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress against the targets in their individual education plans.

Pupils achieve and learn exceptionally well because of the excellent teaching they receive and the outstanding attitudes they bring to their learning. Lessons are characterised by a brisk pace, excellent relationships and clear expectations. There is a high degree of challenge in the tasks teachers set. In the lessons observed, pupils were enthusiastic about their work and, in many instances, took responsibility for their own learning. Pupils' successes were also celebrated in the well planned plenary sessions at the end of lessons, where achievements were shared and the next stages in pupils' learning were discussed. The quality of pupils' learning is greatly enhanced by the excellent support of teaching assistants.

The outstanding curriculum provides very good links between subjects which are often brought to life through excellent enrichment opportunities and a creative approach to learning. For example, themed weeks which focus on topics such as health and industry enable pupils to study a topic in depth and carry out their own research. Pupils really appreciate the regular visitors to school and the visits they make, especially the residential trips to the Lake District, pointing out that, 'It really makes our school an exciting place.' After-school and lunchtime clubs are extensive and provide excellent curriculum support, not only in physical education but also in music, art and craft. The curriculum meets current statutory requirements and French is taught in all classes in Key Stage 2. There is good provision for personal, social, citizenship and health education through, for example, the eco council where pupils are able to work as a team to improve their classmates' understanding of environmental issues.

Teaching is able to flourish because pupils want to learn. The school ethos encourages pupils not only to become high achievers, but also to develop into caring

and responsible young people who are sensitive and mindful of others less fortunate than themselves. Consequently, pupils' personal development, particularly their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. They enjoy coming to school, and their attendance is excellent. They make a highly valued contribution to the school and local community through their willingness to take on responsibility as school councillors or monitors in many areas and their involvement with a variety of local organisations. They show an excellent understanding of healthy eating and the need for regular exercise. There is good collaboration with the local high school where they have good opportunities to experience a wider range of sporting activities and to improve their physical fitness. Preparation for the next stage of their education is excellent as they leave school with very high standards in English and mathematics, a positive attitude towards work and excellent social skills. 'Our school is a team and nothing gets done unless we all work together, which we do', was a typical comment made by Year 6 pupils. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary both in lessons and around the school. Pupils say there is no bullying and that they feel safe in school. This is not surprising given the exceptionally high quality of pastoral care they receive. Academic guidance is excellent. Safeguarding procedures fully comply with current legislation.

The school has a wealth of data on pupils' attainment against which staff monitor pupils' progress closely. The rigorous analysis of this data underpins the success of the school because it allows senior leaders to spot any potential underachievement and take early action to address it. As a result, the school invariably meets, and often exceeds, its very challenging targets at the end of Key Stage 2. Links with other institutions, such as the church and the local high school, are excellent. The school is very outward looking and has developed good links with representatives from other cultures and backgrounds, through, for example, its partnership with a school in Namibia.

Exceptional leadership and management underpin all aspects of the school's work. Led by an inspirational headteacher, the staff and governors share a common vision based on providing an exciting education of the highest quality and they make excellent use of the resources available. The school's contribution towards community cohesion is good. Through its developing links with other schools and charity projects, pupils recognise and value the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances. Senior and middle leaders offer excellent support in ensuring that standards do not slip and checking that all groups of pupils have equal opportunity to take part in the outstanding provision on offer. Governance is excellent. Governors play an important part in the school's success, offering valuable support and challenge where necessary. There were no areas for improvement raised in the previous inspection but the school has worked hard to maintain and build upon its previous successes. There is no complacency and self-evaluation accurately identifies the priorities for further improvement. Consequently, the capacity for further improvement is excellent and the school provides outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The quality of the provision in the EYFS is outstanding. Although children's skills on entry vary, they are generally typical for their age except in their speaking and listening which are below what might be expected. They quickly become confident learners and are happy to use the excellent facilities available to them. By the end of

Reception, children's achievement is outstanding and standards are generally above average. Learning and development are led and managed outstandingly well by the Reception teacher who has tremendous enthusiasm and energy. Children's safety and welfare are maintained at all times. Teaching is excellent and is adapted very well to meet the demands of the different groups of children, including the more able. As a result, by the end of the year, the majority of children meet and often exceed expectations for their age, especially in their personal and physical development and in mathematics.

Children's personal development is excellent because arrangements for their welfare are so strong and because the learning environment is vibrant and well ordered. Activities are closely matched to the requirements for each area of learning, which are carefully planned to take place both indoors and outdoors. Activities are well balanced between teacher-led class sessions, focused adult-led group tasks and purposeful opportunities for children to work on their own. During role play, for example, the teacher encourages children to develop their speaking, listening and writing skills by setting up the play area as a school office. Very well taught sessions on letters and sounds ensure that the early stages of reading are grasped thoroughly. Children's learning is assessed in great detail and their very good progress is tracked in ways that make sure that their next steps are planned most effectively. Parents are justifiably delighted with the way their children learn and with the links between home and school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing throughout the school.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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

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.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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



16 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Philip's C of E Primary School, Atherton, M46 9FD

You may remember that recently I visited your school with Mr Rigby to carry out an inspection. Thank you for talking to us and sharing your views. We listened carefully to what you said and this letter is to explain to you what we found.

- Your school is outstanding and gives you all a great start to school life.
- Your behaviour is exceptionally good and your attitudes to learning are superb.
- You told me there was no bullying and how everyone gets on so well together.
- You enjoy coming to school and your attendance is better than in most other schools - keep it up!
- The teaching you receive is excellent and your progress outstanding.
- You reach very high standards by the end of Year 6 and are very well prepared for whatever high school you choose to attend.
- The leadership and management of your school are excellent and ensure that you are very well cared for indeed.

There is only one thing we have asked the school to do and that is to make sure that your writing continues to improve as you move up through the school. Thank you once again for all your help and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Hewlett
Lead inspector