



# St Theresa's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 104823  
**Local Authority** St. Helens  
**Inspection number** 287044  
**Inspection date** 1 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Adrian Simm

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 address</b>	Cannon Street
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		St Helens
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-11		Merseyside WA9 4XU
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01744 678652
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	237	<b>Fax number</b>	01744 678653
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Rev Fr Philip Swanson
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs H Arnold
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 June 2001		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

This school is of average size and is set within an area of social and economic disadvantage. It is an Extended school working in partnership with a local adult learning and community centre. There is pre-nursery provision inspected separately by the child-care inspectorate. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. These pupils have specific, moderate or severe learning difficulties or physical difficulties. Nearly all pupils are of White British background. The school has gained an array of awards that include the Sports Active Mark Gold (2004), Basic Skills Quality Mark (2005), Arts Mark Gold (2005) and the National ICT Mark (2006).

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The school is outstanding and offers excellent value for money. Together with the extended school provision, the school places itself in the heart of the community with huge success. The school's mission is 'to do little things well': the combination of all of these 'little things' results in pupils' with outstanding achievement and personal development. Children, many of whom start in the Nursery with difficulties in socialising and poor skills in early number, speaking and listening skills, move on to secondary school at the end of Year 6 with above average standards overall in English, mathematics and science. Each stage in school, as they mature through the Nursery, Reception and Years 1 to 6, adds to their skills and personal development equally well because teaching and learning is first class. On occasions, and dependent upon the year group, a very small number of higher attainers in Year 2 could achieve a shade better, particularly in writing. However, overall, pupils' achievement is outstanding. Lessons, small group work or individual support are planned with the individual child in mind and at just the right level. This works extremely well for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Booster work and additional support complement extremely well the individual challenges set by staff in lessons. The governors' policy to employ a high number of well-trained support staff to offer teachers great flexibility in planning for learning is fully justified by the outstanding outcomes for the pupils.

When asked on the playground to point out her best friend, one pupil replied without a second thought, 'I don't have a best friend, everyone is my friend'. Although only one viewpoint this encapsulates the strengths of pupils' outstanding personal development and citizenship qualities. Pupils work extremely hard, contribute significantly to the calm, friendly environment and are keen to take part in all types of activities. Year 6 pupils volunteer to attend early morning booster classes: the vast array of after school clubs is well attended and gives those with special talents an extra opportunity to excel. A number of pupils from an early age accept the chance to learn 'signing' to enhance their drama skills and to take part in liturgical celebrations where the deaf community are present. All of the opportunities presented to pupils to enhance their academic and social skills are rooted within an exciting, vibrant and extremely effective curriculum. Their community spirit and readiness to take on the next challenge in their lives is noteworthy and supported by outstanding care, guidance and support offered by the whole school community. Those parents responding to the inspection questionnaire show strong support for the school.

The school judged itself good but only because it was cautious and unsure how effective a school had to be to be outstanding. In practice, leadership is crystal clear how far the school has come, what has been successful and why, and what else needs to be done. Governors play their full part in the outstanding leadership and management of the school. The school shows all signs of moving on from strength to strength.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement for the very small number of higher attaining pupils by the end of Year 2, particularly in writing.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Attainment on entry to the Nursery is low in comparison with children of this age nationally. Many children on starting, for example, have substantially under developed language, mathematical and social skills. Once settled, they flourish. For children moving into Year 1 in 2006, a high proportion had progressed very well in their work. They were close to achieving the nationally recognised targets set for them. Standards by the end of Year 2 are average overall, although in the 2006 assessments performance in writing was a shade weaker than in reading and mathematics, particularly for those able to attain high levels for their age. There are signs that for current Year 2 pupils, this is improving and that the slight downward trend in recent years has been overcome. As pupils leave to move to high school, standards are above average. Although standards vary as a result of the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in each year group, what matters most is that most pupils make excellent progress from their starting points. Year 6 pupils in 2006 made outstanding progress, with the school's results overall in the top 5% nationally. In the last three years, there is a discernable upward trend in standards by Year 6. A major part of the success is that those who previously had learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress so well that by the time of the national tests most gain national expectations in their work.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

From starting points in the Nursery where children find it initially difficult to relate to each other and play separately, pupils blossom. Throughout the school many pupils are well able to explain how their activities are helping them to grow and mature. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They are encouraged to reflect regularly upon their work, their own needs and those of others, which helps to build very successfully a family atmosphere. The work of the school council feeds positively into school development such as the continuing major role they have in improving the outdoor environment. This underpins pupils' outstanding personal development and citizenship qualities. Where necessary, pupils benefit from the extra special support of the Rainbow club. As a result they overcome as much as possible those particularly difficult times in their lives such as bereavement or family splits. The school has gained an abundance of awards covering, amongst others, healthy living, anti-bullying, careers work and multicultural diversity. Pupils are proud understandably of what they achieve. Attendance is good, although it has fallen slightly in the last two years. However, this trend was spotted by the school and, as a result, first morning phone calls to parents about children's absence appears to be paying off: attendance was 2% higher in the autumn of 2006 in comparison with the same period in the previous year. This is one example of how the school seeks to improve all aspects of its work.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Every minute of the day is a learning experience which for some pupils starts with the 08.00 booster class and can finish around 17.30 at the end of after school activities. All learning experiences for example, in lessons, on the playground, at the lunchtime music club or working on the school council are extremely positive and ensure pupils' achievement and personal development are of the highest order. The high ratio of staff to pupils ensures each and every pupil gets their share of support pitched at the right level for them. This is because of the extent and accuracy of the staff's knowledge of pupils' levels and of what to teach next. Teaching ensures pupils are self-motivated, excited, independent, sociable and know what else they need to do to improve their work. Learning builds very progressively throughout the school. Constant and well-earned praise is given which encourages pupils to try even harder. Children in the Foundation Stage are encouraged very successfully to share resources and to work alongside and with other children at an early age. They become confident in themselves to try new things: speaking and listening skills are built in at every opportunity. Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are built naturally into lessons. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson pupils helped each other to word process and produce a pod cast for the school website to explain to other families and children about the benefits of attending the school.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is very well matched to the learning needs of all pupils. Through the Extended school provision, work is enriched by access to a vast array of out of school clubs covering sports, the arts and foreign languages together with support for homework. A broad range of purposeful educational visits and visitors to school contribute significantly to pupils' learning. Pupils' work with a visiting 'artist in residence' has transformed non-classroom areas into exciting resources which are readily used to extend learning. All pupils are encouraged to develop a healthy and safe lifestyle, with courses on citizenship, sex and relationships and drugs awareness, supported by the community nurse and other outside organisations. Improvements to the school building and grounds have provided the pupils with updated facilities such as the library, outdoor learning environment for the Foundation Stage and improved ICT. In return, pupils respect what is provided for them and they are becoming independent in their learning.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

Staff's very detailed knowledge of pupils' academic and personal needs and where they are up to with their learning, leads to an exceptionally calm and purposeful

environment where pupils thrive. Procedures for ensuring pupils are safe are in place. Staff vetting procedures are in line with government requirements. The work of a broad range of other professionals underpins aspects of the schools success, where specific skills in pupils' welfare, medical, psychological and speech and language needs complement the school's skills very well. In support of pupils with particular needs for example, teaching assistants gain additional skills, such as in speech and language support. The school has very close ties with its local secondary school which ensures pupils' transition from primary to secondary education is as seamless as possible.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher's vision and determination to ensure the best for pupils, and the support from key staff and governors, has resulted in outstanding provision. The chair of governors knows in detail the school's strengths and the processes in place designed to ensure an excellent capacity to improve. There is an atmosphere of enthusiasm and celebration, with the pupils' needs first and foremost. The broad range of awards gained by the school is merited. The headteacher and senior staff have very accurate knowledge of the effectiveness of lessons. Coordinators help track pupils' progress and their strengths and weaknesses in learning and personal development. The learning mentor is an integral member of the successful team in contributing to the success of the extended provision. The school system for improvement planning works very effectively. It impacts extremely well in staff knowing what else needs to be done to improve provision further. It is the foundation of the school's first-rate approach to self-evaluation which involves all stakeholders including partners in the extended provision. The school is extremely effective at attracting additional funding from a broad range of sources which it uses effectively in improving the school accommodation and grounds, thus impacting very positively on pupils' achievement and behaviour.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

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

<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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

It was a delight to meet you when I visited your school. You have so many wonderful opportunities from which to choose activities that interest you and to learn new things. A special thank you to the two Year 6 girls who gave me copies of their draft pod cast work: I will look out for the finished version on the school website. Thank you also to the school council for finding time to talk to me. You have done a really good job helping to design the new playground areas.

All the hard work and skill put in by staff and governors at your school means you have the chance to do very well in your work. Because you also decide to work hard you progress extremely well in lessons: you 'do the little things' so well that I think your school is excellent. I hope your parents are proud of you. I am sure they are especially at those times when you do something really special such as helping at the liturgical celebrations and sign for the deaf community. Your headteacher knows exactly what to do to make your school move on from strength to strength. A few of you who could be a little better in your attendance are already being helped and I have asked your teachers to make sure that in Year 2, those of you who could achieve the very highest levels of work, especially in writing, are encouraged to do so.

I know a good number of you will be able to read this letter but could I ask you to help the younger children to understand it. Perhaps you could read it to them or explain what I have said.