

St Monica's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104905
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	367362
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Steven Hill

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	451
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr George Foster
Headteacher	Mr Paul Kinsella
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 25 lessons involving 16 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body, groups of pupils, the school nurse and the community police officer. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, particularly that related to safeguarding and pupils' achievement. Displays around the school and samples of pupils' work were examined, and questionnaires from pupils, staff and 239 parents and carers were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether the exceptional achievement and outstanding personal development, identified at the last inspection, have been maintained.
- The measures that the school has taken to raise attendance, and the extent of their success, were analysed.

Information about the school

This is a large primary school in an urban setting. The vast majority of the pupils are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils who are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. A nursery class provides for younger children in the Early Years Foundation Stage on a part-time basis. The school provides a breakfast club for its pupils, which is the responsibility of the governing body.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The school provides an outstanding education for all its pupils. It is a happy and harmonious community where pupils get on extremely well together, and show great care and concern for others. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary. The school's exceptional work in promoting community cohesion, particularly through wide-ranging links abroad, has given pupils a strong insight into other cultures and communities. Pupils thrive socially because of the excellent care, guidance and support that are provided. The school takes exceptional care of the well-being, and consequent progress, of pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable. Staff know individual pupils and their families extremely well, and work most effectively with them, and with a wide range of support agencies, to meet individual needs.

Pupils' excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning combine with extremely effective teaching to produce outstanding achievement. Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with attainment which, while variable, is generally well below that expected for their ages. Pupils make excellent progress across the school, so that standards are high. Pupils' overall attainment at the end of Year 6 has been significantly above average for several years.

Teachers manage classes extremely well, with well-established routines based on very positive relationships. They ensure that the excellent curriculum is implemented in a way that engages and enthuses all pupils. A notable feature of lessons is the way that everyone is fully involved throughout, concentrating well and enjoying the interesting activities provided. This is enhanced by teachers' very effective use of the school's high-quality assessment systems to ensure that tasks are tightly matched to individuals' needs. As a result, the pace of learning is often rapid, and pupils take a delight in their own and their classmates' successes. A wide range of intervention programmes, tailored carefully to the needs of specific pupils, is very effective in making sure that none fall behind.

Pupils' great enjoyment of school, however, is not fully reflected in the attendance figures. The school has worked very diligently to improve attendance, making extensive use of partner agencies, and introducing a variety of measures to reduce absence. Consequently, attendance has gone up steadily in successive terms to be broadly average. However, there remains a small group of pupils who have high levels of absence, and who consequently do not make the progress they should. The school has accurately identified that a few parents and carers have not taken on board its message of the importance of attendance, and its impact. Plans are in place to re-emphasise this to these families and to devise further incentives to motivate this small group to attend regularly.

The school is exceptionally good at evaluating its own work. Staff and the governing body share a strategic vision that has the achievement and well-being of individual pupils at its heart. The school takes very effective action to address any shortcomings identified. As a

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result, it has maintained the many outstanding features from the last inspection, and has built on the good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that this is now excellent. All this shows that the school's capacity to improve is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- What does the school need to do to improve further?
- Raise the attendance of the small group of pupils who do not attend school as often as they should, particularly by:
 - stressing to their parents and carers the negative impact that their absence has on their progress and their consequent future economic well-being
 - devising even more systems to motivate and reward these pupils for significantly improving and maintaining their attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Achievement is outstanding and pupils' writing skills are a particular strength. All significant groups of pupils make excellent progress, so their attainment is high. Pupils achieve extremely well in lessons because they work hard to meet their teachers' high expectations. In a Year 6 English lesson, pupils demonstrated their strong speaking and listening skills in a 'hot-seating' drama exercise where they posed questions to a character in a story, played extremely imaginatively by one of their classmates. They subsequently demonstrated their very good writing skills, and their secure understanding of the story, as they made excellent progress in writing a letter in a distinctive, informal style. Pupils in Year 1 made outstanding progress on a variety of literacy tasks as they worked confidently in small groups with adults. Some used dictionaries with increasing skill, all showed great independence in writing, and they made a very good start on evaluating their own and each other's work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same exceptional progress as their classmates, and attain high standards in the light of their starting points. In class, they receive work that is targeted to their particular needs, and adults provide a balance of challenge and support to drive forward their learning. In small groups, carefully matched to their particular requirements, they do exceptionally well. For example, in a 'marvellous maths' session for pupils in Year 2, learning was outstanding because they were able to use the clear strategies that the teaching assistant enthusiastically and clearly modelled for them.

Pupils feel extremely safe in school and are confident that adults will deal with any issues that might arise. Their behaviour is exemplary in class and around the school. They are polite, friendly, welcoming and helpful. Pupils willingly undertake a variety of responsibilities, and older pupils are kind and thoughtful towards younger schoolmates. Their concentration is exceptional, and they work extremely well both independently and collaboratively. However, despite their high standards in basic skills, their preparation for their future lives is good rather outstanding, because attendance is only average. Pupils are extremely enthusiastic about exercise and have a very good understanding of how to stay healthy.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Pupils' outstanding learning is the result of a consistent, positive approach by teachers which ensures lessons are great fun. Pupils like and respect their teachers, and strive successfully to meet their high expectations of hard work and behaviour. Assessment is effective because teachers keep a very clear track of how pupils are doing. They set challenging targets that are shared with pupils and with their parents and carers. Progress is continually monitored in each lesson and teachers provide ongoing feedback, encouraging pupils to refine and improve their work, and quickly identifying and addressing any misconceptions. Very good use is made of the large number of skilled support staff to ensure that pupils are continually challenged and supported to do their best.

The curriculum generates great interest and strongly supports pupils' progress. It is carefully adapted to meet the need of individuals and groups, and incorporates pupils' experiences and interests very well. There is a very wide range of extra-curricular activities that pupils greatly enjoy. The international links are exceptionally strong, particularly through the well-established contact with a school in China. These links greatly expand pupils' understanding of the wider world, and promote their respect for diversity. The use of outside experts, such as the support teacher from the local authority who makes an outstanding contribution to the music curriculum, is another strength.

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The outstanding care, support and guidance provided are confirmed in the very positive feedback from parents and carers. Excellent links with a wide range of other professionals enable the school to provide high-quality guidance targeted to the needs and circumstances of individuals and their families. This enables pupils and their families to make the best of their opportunities. The school's own staff, particularly the teaching assistants, receive high-quality specific training that helps them make an outstanding contribution to the well-being and consequent progress of particular pupils. The breakfast club provides an enjoyable and sociable start to the day for pupils who attend, as well as a healthy breakfast. Excellent relationships with staff and each other are clearly evident, and pupils of all ages settle happily down to a range of activities. Older pupils treat younger children thoughtfully and kindly, and take a lead in helping them join in activities.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher leads the school community very effectively in providing a clear sense of educational direction and sustaining a drive to become even better. The shared vision stems from the inclusion of all stakeholders in the evaluation of provision and in contributing towards the direction of changes. The maintenance of exceptional teaching and learning rests jointly on rigorous monitoring of provision, so that staff are given clear advice on how to improve practice, and thorough tracking of individual pupils' progress, so that any shortcomings are quickly addressed. This also ensures outstanding equality of opportunity for all because any gaps in performance of individuals and groups are quickly identified and dealt with.

Governance is outstanding. The governing body plays a strong part in setting the strategic direction of the school, and has very good systems to understand its performance, so that it can, and does, hold the school to account. The governing body plays a full part in ensuring that pupils are kept safe, and used the changes in the school building very effectively to enhance and refine existing systems and procedures. As a result, safeguarding is outstanding, with parents', carers' and pupils' views given full consideration and recommended procedures followed rigorously. The curriculum ensures that pupils themselves play a full part in understanding how to keep themselves and their classmates safe.

The school is a very vibrant and cohesive community, and carefully planned links with contrasting communities in this country, such as Grasmere, and with a variety of communities abroad, ensure community cohesion is excellent. Partnerships with parents and carers are excellent. Information is shared well through a variety of media, and there

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are particularly strong systems to involve the parents and carers of pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable. Outstanding partnerships with a wide variety of agencies to support pupils' well-being are complemented by good partnerships to enhance the curriculum, for example, with other schools. Staff often take a lead role in such activities sharing their expertise.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make exceptional progress from relatively low starting points, so that many reach the expected standards by the end of the Reception Year. They are very happy and settled in the school, and thoroughly enjoy their opportunities to join in a wide range of exciting activities indoors and out. Behaviour is outstanding and the children show extremely high levels of concentration for their age. They become very skilled at carrying out tasks independently and show unusually good skills in playing cooperatively. The provision is resourced extremely well, with major improvements in the activities available outdoors since the last inspection. This now provides a highly stimulating and welcoming environment that promotes children's progress in all areas of learning. Teaching is first rate and adults show very good skills when intervening in children's play to extend their thinking and develop their vocabulary. A very good balance between child-chosen activities and those directed more closely by an adult is carefully maintained. Children greatly enjoy both. In a story session for nursery children, for example, they were rapt with attention as the teacher gave an enthusiastic presentation of a book that related to their current topic of farm animals. The provision is extremely well led and managed, and a particular strength is the way parents and carers are involved as much as possible. Assessments are used successfully to ensure that activities are matched correctly to children's needs and interests.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	1
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The above average proportion of questionnaires returned show that a very large majority of parents and carers are strongly supportive of the school and what it provides for their children. They particularly value that their children are kept safe, that teaching is good and that children enjoy school. A few parents and carers expressed some concerns about how the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspection evidence shows that the school has some excellent systems to take account of parental views, and it was able to point to examples of where it has made important changes to procedures in response. A few parents and carers also expressed reservations about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team observed outstanding behaviour during the inspection, both in classrooms and around the school. In discussions with pupils, they explained that their classmates sometimes did not behave as well as they should, but they were very confident that the adults always deal with lapses quickly and effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Monica's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 239 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 451 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	146	61	85	36	6	3	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	172	72	65	27	1	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	121	51	103	43	11	5	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	136	57	90	38	10	4	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	157	66	75	31	5	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	122	51	105	44	9	4	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	124	52	105	44	7	3	1	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	111	46	111	46	10	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	116	49	109	46	11	5	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	99	41	113	47	15	6	6	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	93	39	121	51	16	7	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	127	53	98	41	9	4	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	155	65	71	30	7	3	3	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Monica's Catholic Primary School, Liverpool, L20 9EB

Thank you for all the help that you gave to me and the other inspectors when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and were very impressed by how hard you work in lessons. We were particularly pleased to see that your behaviour is excellent, and that you all get along so well together.

St Monica's is an outstanding school. Your achievement is excellent because your teachers and the other adults are particularly good at helping you to learn. You get lots of exciting things to do and we could see how much you enjoy them, just as you told us. You are learning a lot about different people from around the world, and this is helping you to grow up into thoughtful and considerate young people. It is not surprising that your teachers, parents and carers are so proud of you.

The adults are very good at looking after you and making sure that anyone who needs any help gets just the right support. This makes sure that everyone is happy in school and makes the progress they should. Most of you are helped in this because you always come to school when you should. However, a few pupils have too many absences, sometimes without a good enough reason, and so do not learn as much as they should. We have asked the school to concentrate on helping these pupils, and their parents and carers, to improve their attendance, so that they make the same excellent progress as everyone else.

We hope you carry on enjoying life in your excellent school, and that you will carry on helping the adults to make it better through your hard work and good behaviour.

Yours sincerely

Steven Hill

Lead inspector

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