

St John's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132796
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	360438
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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	306
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robert Gittins
Headteacher	Miss Denise Maudsley
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 21 lessons taught by 13 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff, members of the governing body, the School Improvement Partner and with parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at samples of pupils' work in their books and on display. The team analysed a range of documentation including that relating to school improvement, safeguarding, pupils' attainment and progress. Questionnaires were analysed from staff, Key Stage 2 pupils and from 117 parents and carers.

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

- The degree to which the school has maintained the momentum of improvement noted in its last inspection report, especially in pupils' attainment and attendance.
- How well the curriculum is meeting the needs of more-able pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- How accurate leaders' and managers' self-evaluation is and how well focused are the plans for improvement?

Information about the school

St John's is larger than most primary schools. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. Compared nationally, the proportion of pupils who leave or join the school at times other than those of usual transfer is high. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals is also high.

The school manages a children's centre, it has full service extended school and Healthy School status. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2010.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Since the last inspection in June 2009, leaders and managers have taken concerted and effective action to overcome relative weaknesses in pupils' achievement and attainment and in the quality of teaching. Improvement has been very evident over the current academic year, particularly in writing and in the achievement of the more able pupils. By the time they leave, Year 6 pupils' attainment is broadly average. This means that they have made good progress from their overall well-below-expected skills on entry to the Nursery Year. The quality of teaching, of the curriculum and of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision have improved considerably since 2009, and all pupils achieve well. Such good advancement has resulted from a whole-school commitment to improvement, and from accurate and honest self-evaluation that has led to appropriate and well-focused improvement planning. The considerable enhancements to many areas of the school's work point clearly to a good capacity to sustain improvement.

Good teaching and an effective curriculum enable pupils to achieve well and to enjoy learning. Children in the children's centre do well and are effectively provided for. The school's denominational character is reflected in pupils' very strong sense of spirituality, in their good behaviour and positive attitudes, and in their warm relationships with each other and adults. Pupils are cared for and supported well and confidently approach adults if they have any worries. The many improvements made to assessment procedures mean that pupils are fully aware of targets for improvement and how to improve their work.

The school has been working diligently to improve attendance. Despite its very high profile, and the concerted and successful efforts to improve attendance, particularly in reducing the incidence of persistent absenteeism, attendance overall remains low. Leaders and managers are ambitious for further improvements in standards, and are realistic in their acknowledgement that more work needs to be done to further raise pupils' attainment in English and in mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - improving pupils' speaking skills so that when they write they make fewer grammatical mistakes
 - enabling pupils to write more complex sentences
 - focusing more on teaching phonics in Key Stage 2 in order to help average and lower ability pupils to spell more accurately

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- helping pupils to better apply their mathematical skills, especially in choosing the correct operation, in order to solve problems.
- Improve attendance to at least the national average by persuading even more effectively some parents and carers, including those who take their children on holiday in term-time, of the vital importance of regular attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well and enjoy learning. They are extremely positive in their attitudes to learning and eagerly seize the opportunities to participate in the wide range of out-of-class activities on offer. In lessons, they work diligently, being very keen to succeed and to actively discover ways in which they can improve their work. Pupils work harmoniously in pairs or groups to share ideas and to learn from each other, and they contribute effectively to question-and-answer sessions. The excellent relationships evident in lessons reflect the mutual respect between adults and pupils and contribute significantly to the overall good quality of learning. Pupils enjoy being challenged and take a pride in presenting their work well.

All groups of pupils make at least good progress. There has been recent good improvement in the achievement of the more able pupils. Those who are known to be eligible for free school meals achieve very well compared to their peers nationally. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are well supported to make good progress. This also applies to those pupils who join the school from elsewhere part way through the school year. Despite good improvements in pupils' attainment in English and mathematics, some relative weaknesses remain in their ability to write complex sentences, to express themselves grammatically, both orally and in writing, and to use some of their mathematical knowledge and skills to solve problems. Some pupils in Key Stage 2 with average and lower ability have difficulty spelling correctly because they have missed out on the good quality teaching of phonics now evident in Key Stage 1.

Pupils make a positive contribution to the school through membership of the school council, acting as play leaders and librarians, and by helping to organise a number of school events. They also contribute well to the local community, notably in partnership with a local building company in naming the streets of a new housing development. Pupils effectively adopt healthy lifestyles by eating sensibly and taking regular exercise. They say they feel safe and their good conduct reflects their respect for the safety of others. Despite their overall low attendance, pupils' average attainment, their well-developed social skills, for example, how personable they are, and their ability to negotiate and compromise, prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of education and for the workplace.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

The best teaching is characterised by a brisk pace, very effective planning, clearly expressed learning objectives, high expectations and teachers' excellent subject knowledge. All of these were evident in a stimulating Year 2 mathematics lesson, in which pupils responded very enthusiastically to the challenge, at their particular level, to use their knowledge of place value to carry out division calculations. Common strengths in teaching are the very good relationships in classrooms, some effective support from learning support assistants, tasks that are well matched to pupils' needs, the imaginative use of new technologies to stimulate pupils' interest and imagination, and constructive, helpful marking. Teaching is occasionally less strong when there is not a good balance between teachers talking and pupils working on their own tasks, or the more-able pupils are not fully challenged. Throughout the school, pupils' ungrammatical speech is not sufficiently corrected and this contributes to their writing not being of a higher quality.

The curriculum is increasingly successfully in promoting pupils' basic academic skills, and it very effectively enhances their physical, personal and aesthetic development. The wide and rich range of experiences offered to pupils contributes well to their learning and enjoyment. Visiting authors, for example, have provided strong support for the school's successful drive to increase pupils' interest and to improve their skills in writing. An area that the school acknowledges needs development is the more specific teaching of phonics in Key Stage 2.

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That pupils feel so well cared for, are so happy in school and have such positive attitudes, reflects how well they are cared for, supported and guided. Parents and carers are fulsome in their praise for the school's provision, especially those whose children require more support than others. The learning mentor has done sterling work in ensuring pupils' good behaviour and in leading the successful drive to improve attendance. This has been especially the case in reducing persistent absenteeism and to a lesser extent persuading fewer parents and carers to take holidays in term-time. Effective partnerships with support agencies ensure good support for the above-average proportion of pupils on roll whose circumstances make them potentially more vulnerable. The school is very successful in the way in which it helps those pupils who join the school part way through the year to settle in quickly and happily.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher has increased the momentum of improvement over the past year by setting a clear and ambitious vision for the school to strive for excellence in all its work. Together with the able senior leaders she has enthused the whole school community to share that vision and to work effectively towards its achievement. Rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and learning have led to highly appropriate training and support that has had a significant, positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Members of the governing body have very relevant expertise, in finance, the law, education and local government, for example, that enables them to perform their duties effectively, both in supporting senior and middle leaders and in challenging the school's performance. They ensure good leadership and provision in the children's centre.

Parents and carers feel well informed and listened to, although there remain a few who are still to be persuaded of the importance of the children's regular attendance. Strong partnerships with a wide range of institutions contribute well to pupils' learning and well-being, for example, in establishing a smooth transition to secondary school and to enhance teachers' skills.

The school effectively ensures equal opportunity. Pupils' progress is very closely monitored to ensure that appropriate support and interventions are provided where it is found that any pupil has fallen behind. Other checks on participation in school activities ensure the representation of all groups in every aspect of school life. The good partnership the two local Premier League football clubs has contributed significantly to the school's successful efforts to tackle racial discrimination.

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Safeguarding requirements are met and the procedures in place ensure that the site is secure and that pupils are made fully aware of potential risks to their welfare. The school is a very close knit community and promotes cohesion effectively in the local area. Its promotion for community cohesion further afield in the United Kingdom and internationally is less strong. Given pupils' overall outcomes and the effective use of resources, the school provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

In the children's centre, children aged nought to three are well provided for and develop well. There are appropriate facilities, good hygiene procedures and all welfare requirements are fully met, including appropriately trained paediatric first-aiders. Staff understand well the needs of the different age groups and close liaison with parents and carers ensures that they become full partners in their children's development. The children's centre is well led and managed and links with the main school's Early Years Foundation Stage staff are increasingly productive. Arrangements for wrap-around care for the nursery-age children are good. The provision complies with the requirements for registration.

On entry to the Nursery Year, children's skills overall are well below those expected. Testament to the good work achieved in the children's centre, is the fact that the children who have experienced that provision enter with considerably more advanced personal, social and emotional skills than most of the children who have not. Children make particularly strong progress in the Nursery Year and continue to progress well in reception. They settle well on entry and soon learn routines and become increasingly independent, both personally and in their learning. Staff effectively ensure that children have an appropriate balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. They know children's needs

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well through closely observing their development, and use this information well to plan children's new learning. The stimulating indoor and outdoor areas are used well to enhance children's learning. For example, the children built a tent outside to recreate a bible story and inside made a fruit-filled crepe as a snack in the 'cooking' area.

Children play happily with each other and soon learn to take turns and to share resources. Whilst the quality of teaching is consistently good, the effective Early Years Foundation Stage leader acknowledges that to raise children's attainment in reading and writing further, even more imaginative activities to promote these skills could be introduced. There is a strong partnership with parents and carers that contributes well to children's learning and well-being. All welfare requirements are fully met.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The views of parents and carers who completed the questionnaires and of those who met with inspectors are overwhelmingly positive. They were particularly fulsome in their praise for the school's ethos, the quality of teaching and of the care that children receive, and of the way in which the school is led and managed. No pattern of concern emerged and any individual concerns are addressed elsewhere in the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St John'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 117 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 310 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	84	72	31	26	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	85	73	28	24	2	2	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	60	51	52	44	4	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	73	62	41	35	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	77	66	37	32	0	0	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	73	62	38	32	3	3	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	63	54	51	44	2	2	0	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)	61	52	52	44	1	1	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	63	54	49	42	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	47	56	48	2	2	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	54	46	59	50	0	0	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	70	60	42	36	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	77	66	38	32	2	2	0	0

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 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Catholic Primary School, Kirkdale, L4 1UN

May I thank you very much for the warm and polite welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently to see how well you are getting on. You go to a good school and it has improved a great deal since the last time it was inspected two years ago. You have helped it to improve by behaving so well, by trying so hard with your work and being so keen to improve. Well done!

We were also pleased to see that you lead a healthy lifestyle, help a lot around school and in the local community, and that you join in so many activities after school. You make good progress because you are taught well and have lots of interesting things to do. Your writing has improved a lot recently but you could still be doing better in this and in mathematics. Because you are looked after so well you feel safe and seem very happy in school. The new headteacher and the other adults who run the school are doing a good job and want to make things even better for you. To help with this I have asked them to point out more often when you use incorrect grammar when you speak and to help you write more complex sentences, in order to improve your writing. Also, I would like some of you in Key Stage 2 to be taught letter sounds to help with your spelling. To help you to improve your mathematics I want your teachers to make sure that you can better solve those harder problems.

You can help with all these by being a bit more careful with your speech and by thinking harder about which operations to use when you solve problems in mathematics.

Thank you for your help with the inspection and I hope you have a lovely summer holiday.

Yours sincerely

Paul Bamber

Lead inspector

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