

St Cecilia's Catholic Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104645
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	377107
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Marguerite Murphy HMI

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Beryl Pemberton
Headteacher	Philippa Agate
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Eight teachers were observed in 13 lessons and other shorter visits to classrooms. Inspectors also scrutinised pupils' work and held meetings with groups of pupils, members of staff and the governing body, and the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including development plans, safeguarding policies and procedures, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' progress over time. Inspectors analysed the responses in 94 inspection questionnaires returned by parents and carers and a large number completed by pupils.

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

- Apparent variations in the school's trend of above average attainment during the four years since its last inspection, when pupils' writing has remained a relative weakness.
- Whether the quality of teaching and the use of assessment information to support learning are now more consistently good.
- How effectively the newly established leadership team and the governing body are using monitoring, evaluation and development planning to drive improvement.
- The rigour of the school's systems for monitoring and improving attendance and the quality of its policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils.

Information about the school

St. Cecilia's is an average sized junior school situated on the outskirts of the city of Liverpool. The very large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a well below average number from a range of minority ethnic heritages. None of these are in the early stage of learning English as an additional language. An above average proportion of pupils has special educational needs and/or disabilities and is supported at the 'school action plus' stage. A very small number have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to the national average.

The previous long-serving headteacher and deputy headteacher retired at the end of August 2011 and a new headteacher took up her post at the start of September 2011.

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

3

Main findings

St. Cecilia's is a good school in which pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress, especially in reading, mathematics and science. They leave the school with above average attainment overall and high standards in reading, leaving them well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils' outstanding behaviour makes a significant contribution to the good progress and positive attitudes to learning seen in lessons. Relationships are very positive and it is clear that all pupils are valued and cared for within a nurturing environment and all agree that they feel very safe in school.

Good teaching keeps pupils motivated and engaged in their lessons and other activities. Teachers are enthusiastic and plan interesting activities with good use of resources, for example, the 'treasure' maps and pirate costumes being used in a current cross-curricular theme. Pupils' achievements are tracked through regular assessments of their work. However, this information is not always used effectively by teachers in lessons to adjust activities to meet pupils' different needs or ask focused questions of individuals. This leads to missed opportunities to assess pupils' understanding and to challenge them to respond in more depth to move their learning on at a more rapid rate. The best use of assessment can be seen in teachers' detailed marking of pupils' writing, which is an appropriate key focus in the school's priorities for improvement.

Parents and carers unanimously agree that their child enjoys school and that it is being led and managed effectively. This represents a clear vote of confidence in the new headteacher and the support she receives from other leaders and the governing body. Pupils also agreed with this view, and had nothing but praise for all their teachers and other staff. Their smiling faces, kind words and deeds for each other and those less fortunate than themselves exemplify what one pupil described as the 'one big happy family' atmosphere at St. Cecilia's. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contributes to pupils' positive personal skills and their ability to work well as part of a team.

The school's self-evaluation document, completed earlier in the school year, lacks precise evidence to support the judgements made and, therefore, is inaccurate in several respects. The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have only recently started to consider this and make adjustments. The skills of subject leaders and the governing body in contributing to self-evaluation and the monitoring of teaching and

learning are underdeveloped. The school's improvement plans are insufficiently focused on clear success criteria by which the impact of its work on improving outcomes for pupils can be evaluated. The new headteacher is gaining a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, before considering whether any adjustments to provision and staff development may be needed.

Senior leaders and the governing body understand that the school's capacity for sustained improvement is currently satisfactory rather than good. This is because it is too early to see the full impact of the work of the new headteacher and leaders on improving development planning and getting the school on track to raise pupils' achievement further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sharpen teachers' use of information on pupils' current attainment to promote more rapid progress in all lessons by:
 - tailoring planning more closely to fully meet the needs of all groups of pupils, ensuring consistently high levels of challenge appropriate to their needs
 - improving teachers' questioning skills to develop pupils' deeper understanding and ability to carefully consider and expand upon their responses.

- Build on the positive start made so far this term to ensure the school's good or better capacity to sustain improvement in the future by:
 - improving the rigour of monitoring and self-evaluation systems with the involvement of all leaders, staff and the governing body
 - ensuring that monitoring activities are used effectively to inform improvement plans that identify clear timeframes and success criteria to evaluate the impact of the school's work on pupils' outcomes
 - increasing the involvement of middle leaders in monitoring teaching and learning and the sharing of good practice across the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school has generally been above average for the last five years, this rising trend being noted at the time of the last inspection. There are variations from year to year; for example, pupils in the current Years 4 and 6 entered with attainment that is nearer to average. Pupils enjoy school, are confident and achieve well. This was evident in the vast majority of learning activities observed. In a practical mathematics lesson, Year 4 pupils gained good understanding of co-ordinates when working out the correct grid references to 'seize the pirate's treasure' from the classroom floor or to win a gold (chocolate) coin. In a Year 5 history lesson, a group of pupils worked together to come up with questions to ask Guy Fawkes as he was led to the gallows, demonstrating their knowledge of the gunpowder plot. In Year 6 English lessons, pupils were eagerly participating in role play that developed their skills in characterisation and using and interpreting body language in drama. Pupils in a Year 3 English lesson made excellent progress due to the opportunities provided for them to think about and discuss their feelings,

assess their own learning and that of others. On some occasions, pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress. This usually happens when more emphasis is placed on the teachers' input than on pupils working independently on tasks that are matched closely to their needs with the right level of challenge and support. This leads to some higher ability pupils being insufficiently challenged or lower ability pupils being set tasks that are too difficult. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similarly good progress to their peers in lessons, especially when additional help from adults also offers them a good balance of support and challenge.

Pupils have a good understanding of the factors that contribute to healthy lifestyles, including the right foods to eat, and they participate eagerly in physical education and extra-curricular clubs, such as gymnastics. They are proud of the school's and individual pupils' successes in competitions, such as in athletics, football and cross-country running. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, and while believing it 'doesn't happen in our school' they are confident that they would report any form of bullying immediately and action would be taken. The school council take their responsibilities seriously and represent the views of their classmates when 'helping to run the school!'

Pupils' attendance is in line with the national average and rising, for example, the figures for this term so far are higher than at the same time last year. Pupils apply their well-developed basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology well in a wide range of situations. This, and their excellent personal skills, ensures they are well prepared for their future.

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	2
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and consistently motivate and engage pupils in their learning. This is particularly evident when lessons are practical, interactive and include opportunities for pupils to work together in problem-solving

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

activities. Teachers and support staff know the pupils very well and work effectively as a team in the classroom. In the most successful lessons, teachers check pupils' understanding in brief reviews of how groups or individuals are progressing, so that they can reshape the learning activity or address any misconceptions that pupils may have. This is not happening as regularly as it might, nor are all teachers using prior assessments to fully inform future lesson planning for different groups. Pupils' questionnaires indicated that although all agree that adults help them to improve their work, a minority say they do not know how well they are doing at school. However, the extra time and effort given by teachers to provide detailed written feedback to pupils on their writing is starting to pay off in early signs that the wide gap between writing and reading is beginning to narrow.

The good curriculum is broad and balanced and enhanced by a wide range of enrichment activities, including residential trips, day visits and visitors to the school. The curriculum makes a very positive contribution to pupils' enjoyment and engagement in learning, as links between subjects make the learning more meaningful.

The school's good care, guidance and support make a positive contribution to pupils' learning, personal development and well-being. Particular strengths in pastoral care systems are successful in removing barriers to learning for those pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, enabling them to make the best of the opportunities offered. Good transition arrangements are in place for Year 6 pupils preparing to move on to a number of local secondary schools. Partnership with the feeder infant school helps pupils to settle in happily to Year 3 and there are plans to extend this to develop closer curricular links to promote continuity in pupils' learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
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 headteacher has made a very positive start since taking up her position at the beginning of September. She is taking the time to carefully and honestly assess the school's performance and begin to articulate her vision for its future development. The headteacher and governing body are now preparing to recruit and appoint a substantive deputy headteacher and develop further the skills of senior and middle leaders and thus their capacity to contribute to sustained improvement.

The governing body is keen to develop its role further in shaping the future direction of the school. The governing body is committed and interested in the school, its staff and pupils, all of whom are held in high regard in the local community. It fulfils its statutory responsibilities, including for safeguarding pupils. The school's checks on all adults who come into contact with pupils are thorough. Members of the governing body are aware that some policies and procedures have not been reviewed in a

timely and systematic manner, due to other pressing priorities during the changeover in leadership.

A strong commitment to promoting equality of opportunity is embedded in the school's ethos. Assessment information is checked so that action can be taken if individual pupils are at risk of underachieving. More limited attention has been paid to analysing data to check for patterns in the performance of all the different groups of pupils to see if any gaps are emerging. Although pupils known to be eligible for free school meals did better than others nationally in 2011, the fact that others made less than expected progress in English had not been specifically picked up as an area for improvement. Similarly, the leadership of special educational needs provision had not identified the reasons behind the proportion of this group who did not make the expected progress in English in 2011. This delays the speed with which action can be taken to remedy such issues in subsequent years.

Leaders recognise that there have not been sufficient opportunities for teachers to share good practice or develop their skills further by observing and working alongside each other or colleagues in other schools. Although teaching has been monitored on regular occasions, observations have not been rigorous enough to focus on the quality of learning for different groups of pupils.

Community cohesion is promoted well within the school, local community and beyond. Pupils are aware of, and respect, differences between cultures, religions and traditions. However, there is limited evidence of this being reviewed by senior leaders to check on the impact of its work in community cohesion on pupils' attitudes and values. The school itself is a happy and harmonious community. It makes good use of a range of partnerships that contribute to pupils' good achievement and well-being.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	3
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

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed wholly positive views about all aspects of the school's work.

A very few individual concerns or suggestions were raised and these have been shared anonymously with the school so that they can be considered.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Cecilia's Catholic Junior 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 **94** completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 211 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	61	65	32	34	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	65	69	26	28	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	43	46	46	49	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	46	49	52	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	60	64	33	35	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	45	44	47	6	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	49	47	50	1	1	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)	43	46	47	50	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	49	43	46	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	44	48	51	2	2	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	39	47	50	5	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	49	52	43	46	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	59	63	34	36	1	1	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



7 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cecilia's Catholic Junior School, Liverpool, L13 7EA

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed watching you at work and you helpfully answered our questions and talked to us about the things you particularly enjoy.

The inspection team agrees that St. Cecilia's is a good school that has lots of very positive features. For example, your behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding, and you feel very safe in school. It really does feel like 'one big happy family' and you enjoy your lessons and all the other interesting activities, clubs and visits provided for you. You care about each other and help to raise funds for charities to support those who are less fortunate than yourselves. The good teaching, curriculum and care, guidance and support help you to make good progress in your learning and reach above average standards. Writing has not been as strong as reading, mathematics and science, but we can see this beginning to change as you work at it and your teachers give you detailed feedback when they mark your writing books.

Your headteacher, staff and the governing body are very proud of you and want to move the school from good to outstanding by making sure that each one of you makes the very best possible progress you can. The inspection team have left the school with two particular targets for improvement. One is for leaders and the governing body to improve their skills in monitoring the school's work and making detailed plans for improvement, then checking for evidence that their actions are being successful. Second, teachers can improve the way they use assessments of how well you are doing to make sure that each of you has just the right tasks, challenge and support in lessons. You should also look out for teachers' more challenging questions that expect you to think carefully and explain your answers in more detail!

Keep being so positive about learning – this will help you to go far in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Marguerite Murphy
Her Majesty's Inspector

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