

St Finbar's Catholic Primary School

South Hill Road, Liverpool, Merseyside, L8 9RY

Inspection dates 6–7 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Achievement is inadequate because pupils do not make enough progress across the school in English and mathematics. Too few pupils reach the standards expected for their age by the time they leave school.
- Teaching is inadequate overall; there is not enough good teaching to enable pupils to make rapid and sustained progress over time, especially between Years 3 and 6.
- Teachers are not clear enough in lessons about what they want pupils to learn, and they do not use information about what pupils already know, understand and can do to provide activities which meet the needs of all pupils.
- Too often, teachers' marking does not tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work.
- Despite recent improvements, attendance is below average because a significant minority of pupils do not attend regularly enough.
- Leaders do not focus sharply enough on improving teaching. Good practice in teaching is not shared with teachers. Teachers are not set clear targets for their performance which are based on pupils' achievements.
- Plans for improving the school are weak. They do not make it clear enough what needs to improve, how and by when. As a result, leaders are unable to check whether their actions are successfully improving pupils' achievement.
- Senior leadership roles and responsibilities are undecided. Key members of staff are in temporary appointments. As a result, the school relies heavily on outside support.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils enjoy school and say that they feel safe. They are keen to learn and, as a result, they behave well in lessons.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Teachers and support staff provide good levels of care for the pupils. They are good role models for courteous and considerate behaviour, and this means that pupils learn to treat each other with respect.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed all teachers and parts of 15 lessons. Two lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, and took into account the quality of their work and teachers' marking in their books.
- Opportunities were taken to talk to pupils in lessons and around school, and there was a formal discussion with a number of pupils from Years 3 to 6. Inspectors briefly observed pupils in the breakfast club.
- There were too few responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to register, but inspectors listened to the views of parents as they were bringing their children into school.
- Meetings were held with leaders, governors and with representatives from the local authority, and inspectors took into account responses from staff questionnaires.
- A range of documents was examined. This included minutes of meetings, records of monitoring activities such as lesson observations, analysis of behaviour records, improvement plans and information about pupils' progress.

Inspection team

Christine Birchall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Marilyn Massey

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures, because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. It has an Early Years Foundation Stage unit which provides for both Nursery and Reception children.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is lower than average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language is much smaller than average. Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is much higher than average. (Pupil premium funding is provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and the children of military personnel.)
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has a breakfast club which is managed by the governing body.
- The deputy headteacher was promoted to headteacher in the autumn term following the retirement of the previous post holder. She is supported by two acting deputy headteachers, one from within the school and the other provided by the local authority.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good by:
 - ensuring that teachers use information about how well pupils are doing to plan work which meets the needs of all learners
 - ensuring that teachers' marking and feedback always give clear guidance to pupils about what they need to do to improve their work
 - ensuring teachers have high expectations about the standard and amount of work that pupils should produce, and by making sure that there is a good level of challenge for more-able pupils
 - sharing good practice in teaching, and providing targeted support for teachers to improve their practice.
- Ensure that pupils make at least good progress in English and mathematics, especially between Years 3 and 6, so that their attainment rises by:
 - checking the progress of individuals and groups of pupils regularly and robustly, so that leaders and teachers can take swift action to address any underachievement
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their skills and solve problems in mathematics
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write for a range of different purposes, and to produce longer pieces of writing in English and other subjects.

- Improve attendance, particularly of those pupils who do not attend regularly enough, by:
 - consolidating the recently introduced strategies, and ensuring that all pupils and parents have a clear understanding of the importance of coming to school.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, in driving rapid improvements by:
 - ensuring, as a matter of urgency, that the school has well-qualified, experienced and permanent staff at senior leadership level and that their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined
 - ensuring that the school's improvement plans contain actions and ways of measuring success that are closely linked to improvements in pupils' achievement
 - using systems for monitoring teachers' performance to set all teachers clear targets and expected outcomes
 - ensuring that governors have the information they need to be able to hold school leaders to account for the school's performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- From their starting points, too many pupils make inadequate progress in English and mathematics. Pupils' progress between year groups and across subjects is too variable. All groups of pupils, including those supported by the pupil premium and those with disabilities or special educational needs, do not make the progress expected of pupils nationally.
- Children typically enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are well below those expected for their age. They make good progress as a result of well-organised provision, a stimulating learning environment and good teaching.
- In 2012, at the end of Key Stage 1, standards were broadly average. However, pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 requires improvement because the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is too low. This is because the more-able pupils are given work that is too easy for them.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have been well below average for the last four years. The slight improvements in attainment in 2011 have not been sustained. This is because the quality of teaching between Years 3 and 6 overall is inadequate.
- School leaders are starting to take action to raise pupils' attainment in reading across the school. As a result, there is evidence that pupils' enjoyment of reading is increasing, and that by Year 2 the majority of pupils can use phonics (their knowledge of letters and the sounds that they make) to sound out unfamiliar words. In Year 6 most pupils read with confidence. However, in writing pupils are not given enough opportunities to write for a range of different purposes or to build on skills previously learnt. They are not expected to write independently or at length, and expectations and levels of challenge are often too low.
- Progress in mathematics is inadequate and even slower than in English. Work in books and observations of lessons indicate that pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their basic mathematical skills to solve problems.
- The achievement of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is inadequate. In Year 6 in 2012, for example, the attainment of those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in English and mathematics was well below average compared to those eligible nationally. Less than half of the pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal reached the nationally expected Level 4, compared to 68% of this group nationally. Similarly, their attainment also lagged behind those pupils in the school who were not eligible for a free school meal. The progress of both of these groups of pupils from their starting points was inadequate. Leaders' and teachers' tracking of how well these groups of pupils are doing is not robust enough.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate; there is too little which is good or better. Although during the inspection only a very small minority of lessons seen were inadequate, most required improvement. As a result, there is not enough good teaching to accelerate pupils' learning and to raise standards.
- In too many lessons teachers do not identify precisely what they want pupils to learn. The activities and resources provided are not organised well enough to ensure good progress. Too often, all pupils are expected to do the same activity. As a result, the less-able pupils struggle while the more-able pupils find their work too easy. The pace of learning slows because teachers talk for too long and pupils are not given enough time to get on with work independently.
- Teachers have low expectations of the quality and amount of work that pupils should produce in a lesson. The level of challenge for more-able pupils is limited because too much guidance and too many examples are provided and not enough is done by the pupils themselves. The standard of work in pupils' books is not good enough because they are not given enough opportunities to develop their skills in writing at length in English or to solve problems in mathematics.
- Teachers do not use information about what pupils have already learned to identify precisely

where pupils are falling behind and then to provide engaging learning activities in lessons which will help them to catch up. Although there are now clearer guidelines about what teachers should include in their marking, such as reference to pupils' targets, the quality of marking is not always good enough to help pupils to move forward quickly.

- When teaching is at its best, teachers ask questions that probe pupils' understanding and make good use of support from other teachers and teaching assistants to move individual pupils' learning forward at a good pace. In one lesson, the teacher very skilfully identified where pupils were struggling and changed the lesson so that they could understand and make progress.
- In all lessons observed, relationships between adults and pupils were positive and ensured that pupils enjoyed what they were learning and behaved well.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults have a very good understanding of children's capabilities. Adults are very skilled at providing activities that are matched well to children's varying learning needs and which motivate and engage children well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- Although many aspects of behaviour and safety are good, they require improvement overall. This is because attendance is below average. However, attendance is starting to improve. For example, the attendance of pupils so far this year is much higher than at the same point last year. Even so, too many pupils do not attend regularly and this has a negative impact on their achievement. As yet, not all pupils understand the importance of coming to school every day.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They have positive relationships with adults and trust they will be well looked after and supported. They understand the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and report that very little bullying occurs. They say that when it does, teachers always deal with it. In conversations with inspectors, parents agreed that their children are well looked after.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and are keen to learn. They take pride in their work and present it with care. However, they are not always given enough opportunities to work independently or collaboratively.
- Around school pupils are friendly, courteous and inquisitive. Even the very youngest children were confident in approaching and talking to inspectors.
- Pupils value opportunities to make contributions to the school and wider community. Members of the school council feel confident that what they do, for example looking after the environment, is valued, and that adults listen to their points of view. They enjoy supporting others and fundraising for charity. The breakfast club ensures that pupils are provided with a happy and secure start to the day.

The leadership and management

are inadequate

- Leaders and managers are having too little effect on the work of the school, and the ability of school leaders to bring about the required improvement is weak. Standards remain well below average at the end of Year 6. Results, particularly in mathematics, have been a concern for a number of years and the strategies for improvement, especially improving the quality of teaching, are inadequate.
- The newly appointed headteacher has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school's performance and is determined to do so. She has already made a number of changes and has enlisted much more support from the local authority, but these are yet to result in better progress for pupils. Similarly, there is no clear senior leadership structure. As a result of recent changes and temporary positions, roles and responsibilities are still undecided. This is holding the school back from improving at a good enough rate.
- Leaders do not focus sharply enough on improving teaching. Weaknesses in teaching have not been tackled successfully. A range of training to support teachers' professional development needs has been provided. However, the records of observations by school leaders, as well as

inspectors' observations, show that this is having very little impact on improving teachers' performance in the classroom. Where performance is not good enough, leaders have failed to take robust enough action and opportunities to share good practice in teaching among staff are overlooked. Teachers are not set clear targets for their performance which are based on pupils' achievement.

- Leaders hold meetings with teachers every half term to discuss the progress of pupils in their classes. These meetings are not rigorous enough to hold teachers to account and to drive up standards. There are too many variances in the way data that track pupils' progress are produced and collated. This information is not used well enough to pinpoint where learning is too slow and any variations in pupils' achievement, such as of different groups of pupils. The wide differences in pupils' achievement illustrate that the school's efforts to promote equality of opportunity are inadequate.
- A school improvement plan is in place and it is focused on the correct priorities. However, the way the impact of actions will be checked is not linked clearly enough to the impact on pupils' achievement.
- In the past, the local authority has been too slow to take action. However, since the summer of 2012 it has been providing good-quality support and challenge. Consultants are providing support in many ways, such as meeting with senior leaders regularly to hold them to account, delivering training for teachers in English and mathematics and, very recently, seconding a local authority officer as acting deputy headteacher. However, because the rest of the school's leaders are only temporarily in post, the ability of school leaders to secure improvement relies heavily on this external support.
- The school provides an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities, including visits to places of educational interest. These contribute well to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. However, the curriculum overall is inadequate because it fails to meet the needs of all learners. There is insufficient understanding among senior leaders about how pupils are to progress through each subject.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are supportive of the school. They can see improvements in the school's ethos and raised expectations of leaders resulting from the appointment of the new headteacher and support from the local authority. They, too, are keen to strengthen the quality of challenge and support they provide and, as a result, have appointed two new governors as well as undergoing additional training. However, the governing body does not have a clear enough understanding of the performance of the school and, in particular, of the quality of teaching and the impact of measures to improve teachers' performance. They know how the school spends the pupil premium funding, for example through strategies to improve attendance and the promotion of reading; however, they do not monitor the impact of the pupil premium closely enough. They ensure that safeguarding procedures meet requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104640
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	400729

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	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr J Southworth
Headteacher	Janet Conley
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2009
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