

St Oswald's Catholic Infant School

St Oswald Street, Liverpool, Merseyside, L13 5SB

Inspection dates

6–7 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This is a very happy and caring school. Pupils thrive within a calm and purposeful learning environment.
- Leadership at all levels, including governance, is good. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development because of regular, meticulous and robust checks on the school's performance.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in their personal development. From individual starting points which are well below those expected, pupils reach average levels by the end of Key Stage 1. This represents good achievement.
- Leaders have ensured that aspects of teaching have developed and improved; this has resulted in rapid improvements, particularly in writing and raised achievement. Teaching is good and some aspects are outstanding. Teachers have high expectations and provide stimulating activities for the pupils.
- Pupils are proud of their school, behaviour is good and they feel safe. They respect one another and are keen to help and take on responsibilities. There are high levels of mutual respect between pupils and staff.
- Governors are very supportive. They ask challenging questions because they believe that nothing but the best is good enough for the pupils. The governing body has, therefore, helped the school to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching.
- In a small number of lessons, the tasks set for the pupils are not always precisely matched to their ability and too much time in lessons is taken up by pupils listening to teachers instead of doing their own work.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) and in applying their basic reading, writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- There is too little time for pupils to be independent and explore learning for themselves.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons. In addition, they observed the teaching of small groups of pupils receiving extra support for English and mathematics.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and to parents as they brought their children to school in the morning. They took account of 53 responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- Meetings were held with six members of the governing body, staff and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including those relating to child protection and safety, the school's monitoring of teaching and school improvement.
- Inspectors heard four groups of pupils read and checked the school's assessments of pupils' progress in reading. They also looked at the school's tracking system showing pupils' progress in mathematics and English.

Inspection team

Andrew Morley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jonathan Chicken	Additional Inspector
Alan Parkinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Oswald's is larger than the average sized infant school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, children from service families and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is broadly average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action, and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are above average.
- The majority of pupils are White British. While increasing, the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than the national average as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school has a number of awards, including Basic Skills Quality Mark and Healthy Schools Status.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring teachers use what they know about the pupils' learning to help plan work that is specifically matched to individual pupils' needs and abilities
 - providing more opportunities for the pupils to work independently of their teacher and take more responsibility for their own progress
 - making sure teachers provide pupils with clear guidance in their marking on how to improve their work, time to respond to these comments and encourage them to evaluate their own work and that of their classmates
 - providing more regular opportunities for teachers to share outstanding aspects of teaching across the school.
- Improve the curriculum by:
 - ensuring that pupils are given opportunities to practise and apply their reading and mathematical skills consistently in their topic work
 - further developing the use of information and communication technology skills in lessons.
- Ensure that the attendance of all groups of pupils is good.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The majority of children start in the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are generally well below those typically expected for their age, with many children starting school with communication and language skills that are well below those expected. Lively resources and well planned activities, both indoors and out, mean they are excited and eager to learn. Children are encouraged to talk about what they are doing, to share and take turns as they play.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school. By the end of Key Stage 1, they reach improving standards in writing and mathematics that are in line with the national expectations. Standards in reading are also improving and above the national expectations. The school is committed to ensure achievement is raised further.
- Early reading skills are taught well. By Years 1 and 2, pupils use their understanding of letters and sounds to build unfamiliar words. Older pupils enjoy reading and understand its purpose as an essential life skill. They talk about books they have read, and about how much they read during their lessons, including when doing research on the internet.
- The school has worked hard to improve writing since the last inspection. Progress in writing has improved and pupils are now making good progress. Work in pupils' books shows specific writing skills are regularly being practised, including when pupils write in other subjects.
- Pupils who receive additional funding through the pupil premium make the same progress as other pupils, both through additional support and opportunities to enhance their experiences. In 2012, they did less well than other pupils in English and mathematics tests at Key Stage 1. However, the school has targeted this group of learners and in 2013, their expected achievement will be close to that of other pupils.
- The progress of disabled pupils, who have special educational needs, those from minority ethnic groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language is consistent; an increasing number make good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. Special programmes support pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good with some that is outstanding, resulting in most pupils making good or better progress. Pupils know what is expected of them and are encouraged to improve by their teachers.
- In the best lessons, teachers are very skilled in providing activities to enthuse and challenge pupils. For example, in one Year 2 class, pupils used a non-fiction text to help them generate questions; the teacher very skilfully analysed the progress of pupils and challenged them to improve their work. Pupils were excited and motivated, producing a high standard of work.
- In the best lessons, teachers plan really well so pupils learn rapidly because they are given work that matches their ability and they are finding out things for themselves. Occasionally, pupils find work too easy or too hard and some teachers do not always adapt the lessons to meet pupils' individual needs quickly enough. In a small number of lessons, pupils are not given enough opportunities to explore learning for themselves and develop their own thinking.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy their learning. They quickly settle into lessons and learn to follow routines. They are encouraged to choose their own activities. Nursery children were helped in their learning by a visit to a local farm. They were able to use this experience to help them in a range of activities, including counting. In one lesson, they were choosing their favourite animals to produce a bar chart.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and explain ideas clearly and confidently. This was evident in phonics and intervention sessions. The pupils were confident that the teacher could help them overcome any difficulties if they arose.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use questions well to enable pupils to explain their answers to

one another and to the teacher. These questions give pupils opportunities to explore and develop their understanding.

- Pupils enjoy learning through themes or topics. Teachers look for connections between different subjects to make learning more interesting and meaningful. However, basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are not always planned and taught sufficiently across a range of subjects to ensure pupils maximise progress.
- Teaching assistants are used very well to support individual pupils or small groups. They have a positive effect on pupils' learning and support and help with their early literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers support the development of pupils' literacy skills by using very well organised guided reading sessions and curriculum enrichment activities.
- There are some very good examples of effective marking where teachers show pupils clearly how to improve their work. However, pupils are not always given enough time to follow up advice and feedback does not always tell pupils clearly what to do to get better. There are limited opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work and that of their peers. The best practice in marking and feedback is not always shared with other staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are well behaved, courteous and polite at all times. In lessons, they show positive attitudes to the teacher, their learning and one another. This makes a strong contribution to the friendly and welcoming atmosphere that pervades the school.
- Older children are actively engaged in working with the school leaders to set standards and ensure behaviour is of the highest quality. They understand their responsibility to model good behaviour and safe practice. The 'buddies' and 'monitors' show great maturity in their role to ensure that younger children are looked after on the playground and around the school.
- School life is enhanced by pupils' willingness to take on responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council. In doing so, they learn about the democratic process and have a voice in how the school develops.
- Pupils are very caring towards one another and this was evident at lunchtime when pupils were very supportive of one of their friends who was a little upset. Pupils enjoy playtimes and appreciate the 'Quiet Garden', and many took the opportunity to quietly read or sketch the flowers and trees.
- They know about different kinds of bullying, such as physical bullying and name calling, and say such instances are rare. Pupils with behavioural difficulties who find it hard to act responsibly at times respond very positively to the school's consistently applied behaviour management strategies and their behaviour has shown marked improvement over time.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. They learn how to react if approached by a stranger and the dangers associated with roads, railways and water. They are confident that any issues raised will be dealt with promptly and effectively by the school.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in comments such as 'We like St Oswald's and we look after each other.'
- Attendance was an issue at the last inspection. The school is working with a range of agencies and has targeted specific families for support. The school has improved attendance year on year but understands that this will need to remain a focus to ensure the school achieves at least average attendance.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. The overwhelming majority who responded to Parent View indicated that the school makes sure children are well behaved and deals with bullying effectively.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has high ambitions for the school and is well supported by the deputy headteacher and governing body. Actions have led to improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement since the last inspection. There is a cohesive staff team committed to giving all pupils the best possible opportunities.
- Senior leaders are accurate and honest in their judgements about the school. They know what still needs to be done and have set appropriate priorities to improve the school further.
- Leaders share a determination to improve teaching further by ensuring teachers have the opportunity to learn from the outstanding practice of their colleagues. This is having a limited impact as it is not fully developed throughout the school. Leaders regularly check the quality of teaching in lessons and pupils' work and provide guidance to teachers on how to improve their teaching. High quality training is provided to meet whole-school and individual teachers' needs.
- The progress of individual pupils is tracked closely and all staff are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity. Information is increasingly used by teachers to plan lessons that are specifically focused at the individual pupil.
- Leaders are keen to develop the curriculum, which provides a broad range of activities to enrich pupils' experiences both within and outside school. Visits to art galleries, Formby Nature Reserve and visitors, such as the gymnast Beth Tweddle, are just some that are appreciated by pupils. The leadership team is aware of the need to develop ICT and make sure that reading, writing and mathematics are taught more systematically across all subjects.
- The school develops the spiritual, moral and social aspects of the pupils' learning well. Assemblies provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on their lives and on how they can help others. Pupils learn about other religions and cultures through visits to mosques, synagogues and the local parish church. The leadership team is keen to provide more first-hand opportunities for the pupils to experience other cultures.
- The school has good links with St Oswald's RC Junior School, the work with the West Derby Network and the Liverpool Learning Partnership which support improvements across the school.
- Relationships with parents are positive and the school works hard to involve them. Parents are involved in the school's forum and many are actively engaged in supporting their children to develop reading, which was evident in the Friday morning Reading Club.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority has provided good support, which has contributed to school improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body know the school well and are very involved in school life. They are committed to making sure all pupils get the best possible opportunities and ask challenging questions if they feel pupils are not doing well enough. They have a good understanding of the school's performance data and of the quality of teaching. They are kept well informed about the outcomes of staff performance management and decisions relating to pay progression. They are determined that there will be value for money and make sure that additional staffing and equipment funded through the pupil premium have a positive impact on eligible pupils' achievement.

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	104659
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	412610

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	335
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	V Trickett
Headteacher	R O'Brien
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2010
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