



Office for Standards  
in Education

## **Inspection Report**

# **ST CUTHBERT'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL**

Unique Reference Number: 104649  
LEA: Liverpool

**Inspection Dates: 6 - 7 July 2004**  
**Reporting Inspector: Michael Sutton HMI**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the staff of St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary and Nursery School and of the local education authority. The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an independent lay inspector.

### **Key for inspection grades:**

|         |              |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Very good    |
| Grade 2 | Good         |
| Grade 3 | Adequate     |
| Grade 4 | Not adequate |

### **Description of the school**

The school serves an area of Liverpool which has high levels of social deprivation and unemployment. There are 153 children on roll and a further 33 attend the nursery part time. A significant number enter or leave the school mid-year. The number of children entitled to free school meals is very high. When children are admitted to the nursery many do not have the skills or knowledge typical of three and four year-olds. Around a third of the children have special educational needs. One in ten is from an ethnic minority heritage and about seven per cent do not speak English as their first language. There are also small numbers of children from asylum seeking families.

## **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL**

St Cuthbert's is a good school which gives good value for money. The school sees itself this way too. Teaching is good and the children do a wide range of interesting and varied work. Their personal development is exceptional.

The standards that children reach by the age of eleven are below average but are rising and the children make good progress. The school views leadership and management as good but inspectors judge it to be adequate. This is because the leaders do not take a sufficiently critical look at the school's work and governors do not know enough about how well the school is doing.

**Grade: 2**

### **Improvement since the last inspection**

Improvement has been adequate. The school has maintained the standards of teaching and the progress children make particularly in the infant classes. It has increased the number and quality of computers and developed the teachers' skills in using them.

**Grade: 3**

### **Capacity to improve**

The leadership has created an outstanding atmosphere of friendship, peace and security for the children and staff. It has successfully created a new nursery this year. However, the school leaders and governors rely too much on informal ways of judging how well the school is doing. The school recognises this weakness and there is no doubt that it can improve. However improvement will only be adequate until management puts in place a more systematic evaluation of its progress.

**Grade: 3**

### **What the school should do to improve further**

The school should:

- improve the systems for checking how good teaching is and how well children do to ensure a more consistent approach throughout the school
- give the subject leaders a stronger role in reviewing and raising standards
- increase the governors' understanding of the school by providing them with better information about standards and involving them much more closely in planning how the school should improve.

## **ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS**

The school views the children's achievements as good and the inspectors agree. The standards the children reach by the ages of seven and eleven are below those expected in

English, mathematics and science. However they do at least as well in these subjects as children do in similar schools and in writing, by Year 2, and in English and science by Year 6, the children do much better than this. Standards are rising, particularly in Key Stage 1 where they are going up faster than nationally. The inspection confirms this picture although there is some variation in progress across classes.

The children make good progress overall. When they start school many have a lot of catching up to do when compared to children of their age nationally. The children in the nursery and reception do particularly well. By the end of their reception year they reach the standards expected for children of their ages in personal and social development and in mathematics. They still have a little way to go in communication, language and literacy. In the rest of the school the children work hard and are doing well. They make better progress in English than in mathematics. Standards in speaking and listening are rising but in some classes there is scope to improve children's handwriting, which the school recognises and plans to address.

The children with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language make very good progress. This is because the teachers thoroughly understand their needs and plan very well how best to help them. The class assistants provide excellent support for these children and work very well as a team with the teachers.

**Grade: 2**

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The school judges that pupils' personal development is very good and the inspectors fully agree. Firm and fair action by the school has improved the levels of attendance to satisfactory and most children arrive on time. Behaviour throughout the school is very good due to the school's high expectations and the excellent relationships between all members of its community. All children have very good attitudes to school and feel that they have a strong "voice" through the well-established school council. Children with special educational needs receive very effective help because their needs are planned for thoroughly and teaching is very effective.

The children's spiritual, moral, social, cultural and physical development is very good. The children have written very moving and sensitive prayers for the "Prayer Board", reflecting the strong spiritual development which underpins all that the school provides. The children respect and understand the feelings, beliefs and values of others as evident in the way children from asylum seeker families are supported and helped by other children.

Moral and social issues are taught well. The children understand right from wrong. They are very polite and courteous to one another and to visitors. The children's knowledge of their rich cultural heritage is good but more could be done to improve further their understanding of other cultures.

The school provides a very good range of sporting activities in which many children take part. These, together with the school's healthy eating initiatives help improve the children's levels of fitness and well-being.

**Grade: 1**

## **QUALITY OF PROVISION**

The quality of teaching is good but there are a few weaknesses in the marking of the children's work and in the use of goals for individuals to reach. Staff know what their children need to learn next because they regularly assess how they are doing. They expect and encourage them to succeed. As a result, the children do well and have very positive attitudes to their work. Those with special educational needs and those learning English as a new language are very well taught.

The best lessons are lively and purposeful. Teachers explain clearly to the children what they are going to learn and plan the right sort of work for them, such as discussions, investigations and independent tasks. The teachers ask questions which make the children think in order to solve problems. They give them time to reflect and to construct answers. The quality of marking and presentation vary too much and goals for children are inconsistently used. For example, in some classes work is marked carefully and written comments from the teacher help the children improve. In other classes such comments are scarce. The standard of presentation of children's work is good in some classes but weak in others. In some books, children have clear accurate records of what they need to improve most, in others they do not.

The work the children do covers a wide range of activities and experiences. The teachers use the national guidance to plan their lessons and there are good opportunities for the development of personal, social and health education.

The care for children is exceptional. It is well planned with regular meetings between teachers, support assistants and outside agencies, when necessary. Very good provision is made for the children who have specific medical or personal needs. For example, the programme to improve coordination skills for those children who find this hard, is proving very effective. Child protection procedures are firmly in place. As a result, all children are safe and secure.

What is striking is the way children care for one another. For example, the advocacy team of school councillors offers a "listening ear" to children who have a problem. Health and safety and risk assessments are fully in place. Parents and carers agree that children grow and thrive within the "family" of St. Cuthbert's School. They meet regularly with staff to review their children's progress. End of year reports provide an adequate summary of their children's achievements but could say more about how they could improve further.

**Grade: 2**

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The school thinks that leadership and management are good and there are considerable strengths in the ways in which children are developed and cared for. However, weaknesses in the way that educational matters are evaluated mean that overall, leadership and management are adequate.

The headteacher through his example has created an atmosphere where care, mutual respect and support pervade everything the school does. As a result the children's behaviour and attitudes are exceptionally good. This means that teachers can teach without having to spend time maintaining discipline. Everyone is valued and all children have a strong identity within the school community, even those who arrive mid year or who stay for only short periods. The school makes very good use of the support provided by educational, social and health services.

The school leadership knows broadly how well the school is doing, but does not gather information systematically enough and often relies on intuition and informal visits to classrooms. This gives a general overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses but not sufficient detail. Last year all teachers were observed teaching and received helpful feedback. This year none has been observed. The teachers who lead the various subjects have insufficient time to rectify the strengths and weaknesses in what both children and teaching colleagues do. As a result, there is too much variation in the quality of what happens; for example in the marking, the presentation of children's work and the use of goals to help children improve further. Those teachers who manage English, special educational needs, English as an additional language and assessment of children's progress, have a much clearer view of the strengths in these areas. They know what needs to be done next to raise standards.

The school records children's results from their end of year assessments and uses this information to set targets for teachers to aim for by the end of the following year. It does not analyse the data in sufficient depth to determine trends and patterns, for example in the different progress being made by children in English compared to mathematics.

The governors support the school well in its general work. They have been heavily involved in the successful opening of the new nursery class. They have a good oversight of the schools finances, health and safety and of the work with children with special education needs. They do not get enough information from the school about the standards that children attain and do not contribute sufficiently to plans for improvement. As a result the governors are not well placed to help the school to improve more rapidly.

There are good levels of teaching and support staff. The classroom assistants are very well deployed and provide very good support for individuals and groups. The school makes the best use of the limited accommodation. Resources are adequate.

**Grade: 3**

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