



Inspection report

St Oswald's Catholic Junior School

Unique Reference Number 104658
LEA Liverpool

Inspection number 269339
Inspection dates 24 – 25 November 2004
Reporting inspector Jane Wotherspoon HMI

Inspection carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed section 10 under the same act.

Type of School	Junior School	School address	Montague Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Old Swan
Age range of pupils	7 – 11		Liverpool
			L13 5TE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 2594580
Number on roll	347	Fax number	0151 2284512
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Norah Warburton
Date of previous inspection	April 1999	Headteacher	Miss Margaret Susan Jones

Age group	Published	Reference no.
7 - 11	December 2004	269339

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 Oswald's Catholic Junior School and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two contracted inspectors.

Description of the school

St Oswald's is a large junior school in the city of Liverpool. The number of pupils who take free school meals is higher than average. Over a quarter of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, though none has a statement. A few pupils are from ethnic minority heritages, but all speak English fluently. When pupils start school at the age of seven, their skills and knowledge are lower than expected. A long-term building project to increase the number of classrooms is almost finished.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

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Overall effectiveness of the school

This is a good school with several features that are outstanding. This is similar to the school's own evaluation of its work. Teaching is good and pupils achieve well. Standards are better than those of similar schools. Care and support for pupils are excellent. Staff go the extra mile to make every child feel that they matter. Personal development is outstanding. Behaviour is excellent and pupils develop into mature young people in this calm, orderly community. They enjoy learning because their work is presented in an interesting and stimulating way. The headteacher gives a strong lead for raising standards and has devised good management systems to achieve this. The school gives good value for money.

Grade: 2

Improvement since the last inspection

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection in 1999. Issues raised then have been tackled rigorously. Teaching has improved and standards are rising. Improved resources for information and communication technology (ICT) are helping pupils to develop their computer skills.

Grade: 2

Capacity to improve

The headteacher knows the school well. She knows what needs to be better and has made a strong start on bringing about long-term improvements. Staff are committed to doing their best for the pupils. There is very good capacity for further improvement.

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing.
- Ensure a consistent approach to marking pupils' written work, and to setting targets so that they know what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Pupils are making good progress. Standards are rising and they are consistently above those of similar schools in English, maths and science by the time pupils leave the school. Listening skills are good and the oldest pupils are articulate and confident in expressing their views. Good improvements in science have been secured by teachers' greater focus on investigative work in lessons. Pupils' ICT skills are developing well. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress towards achieving the small steps that are set for them.

The school knows that there is more to do to raise standards in writing, and this is, rightly, a focus for improvement. In particular, weaknesses in the younger pupils' knowledge and use of spelling strategies need to be tackled with more rigour. The content of pupils' writing is often interesting and, by Year 6, pupils are beginning to think more carefully about the words they choose to use. They are learning to write in different styles because teachers give them good opportunities to use their writing skills in other subjects. Pupils present their work neatly, but their handwriting is not consistently joined.

Grade: 2

Personal development and wellbeing

These are outstanding. Pupils' attitudes are overwhelmingly positive. They say that they enjoy school very much and consider it 'fantastic!' Attendance is improving and punctuality is good. Pupils frequently work with a smile and they clearly enjoy the many exciting things they are given to do. Behaviour is outstanding at all times. Pupils embrace the school's 'Golden Rule' and show through their actions the respect and care they have for others and themselves. They are eager to act as a school council member or a prefect, with a clear understanding and ready acceptance of their social responsibility to others.

Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding; they pray with conviction and reverence as they consider their own lives and those of others. Very good opportunities for guided meditation at assemblies or in circle time help them to become calm and ready to learn. Pupils' growing knowledge and understanding of their own and other cultures are fostered strongly through frequent and well planned events, as well as in lessons. Pupils know what to do to make their school happy, safe and healthy. They say, very readily, that they feel safe at school and that they have no personal fear of being bullied or discriminated against. They trust the staff and are confident that there is always someone they can turn to for help.

Grade: 1

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good overall, with some that is very good. As a result, pupils achieve well. Excellent relationships and well-established routines help to create a purposeful environment for learning. Good quality displays of pupils' work celebrate their efforts and serve as a reminder of what is expected. Teachers encourage pupils to work together in pairs or groups, and this fosters their independence.

Most lessons start with teachers explaining to pupils what they are going to learn, though not always in simple terms. Activities are generally planned at different levels of difficulty to match closely the pupils' abilities. Teachers deploy support staff effectively to help pupils with special needs to make progress. At its very best, teaching brings together a number of the following features: very good use of the computer to present information that captivates pupils' attention, such as in an English lesson in Year 5; high expectations of work are set, and met; activities are varied, interesting and capture pupils' imagination by giving them opportunities to present their work in different ways. Open-ended questions, such as those in a Year 6 history lesson, challenge pupils to think more deeply about the answers they give.

Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and use this information when planning activities. Increasingly, pupils are involved in assessing their own work and this helps them to take responsibility for their own achievements. Teachers' marking of work, especially pupils' writing, is inconsistent. All work is marked regularly and pupils are praised for their efforts, but the best marking also gives clear guidance on what needs to improve next.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

The school offers pupils a wide range of interesting and stimulating lessons. A very good range of clubs and out of school activities run by teachers and other adults adds to their enjoyment of learning. In addition, these rich experiences help pupils to develop healthy and varied lifestyles. Lessons and other activities meet the needs of all pupils well. Those with special educational needs are given appropriate support and more able pupils are challenged. This helps to get the best out of all.

All aspects of the work are regularly reviewed, checked and renewed. Much attention has been given to strengthening links between subjects to help pupils make sense of what they are learning. This is done well, for example, through themed weeks on topics such as 'health', 'multicultural activities' and 'anti-bullying'. They contribute much to pupils' enjoyment of school as well as to their achievement.

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support

The school's care and support for pupils are outstanding. As well as making effective use of its own resources, the school benefits from the advice and support of outside agencies to ensure that pupils have a safe place in which to learn, play and grow. Support for vulnerable pupils is exceptional and they achieve very well. Pupils' academic and personal development is monitored thoroughly. Because they feel very safe in school pupils become confident learners who are sure they can succeed. Child Protection procedures are very well known. Effective action is taken to help eradicate bullying and oppressive behaviour, and incidents are very infrequent. Possible risks to health and safety are assessed carefully, and action is taken to minimise these. The school promotes strongly the health and wellbeing of its pupils by providing them with good opportunities for physical exercise. Pupils are taught that they need to prepare themselves to learn. They enjoy doing this by using 'brain gym' exercises, or by quietly reviewing their thoughts as they have practised during guided meditation.

Grade: 1

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good, with very good elements. A very clear vision of a caring Christian community where every child matters is at the heart of everything. The headteacher has ensured that this approach permeates the school.

Strong leadership from the headteacher is focused on raising standards. Very thorough systems for evaluating the effectiveness of the school's work, and for weighing up what actions to take, have been established. National and other test results are looked at very carefully to identify what needs to improve. These approaches are having a good effect and standards are rising. The school development plan includes contributions from many staff, and takes account of the views of parents. It contains appropriate actions and is a powerful tool for directing the school's continuous improvement.

The Governing Body fulfils its statutory responsibilities. Many governors are new, and a governors' development plan highlights the need for further training for their roles. The roles of subject leaders are developing soundly. Resources are well managed, and directed towards improvements. The school has good links with local schools and organisations, and with the parish of St Oswald's.

Grade: 2

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