



# The Sylvester Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 104419  
**LEA** Knowsley  
**Inspection number** 277150  
**Inspection dates** 16 November 2005 to 17 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Frank Carruthers CfBT Lead Inspector

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	St John's Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Huyton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		Liverpool, Merseyside L36 0UX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 477 8320
<b>Number on roll</b>	354	<b>Fax number</b>	0151 477 8321
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr G Brown
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 January 2001	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr J Manning

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a large school situated in an area of social and economic need. The school roll has declined since the last inspection and this is a feature of other schools in the locality. There are very few children from minority ethnic heritages although two are learning English as an additional language. The attainment of most of the children on entry to the nursery is well below that usually expected of children of this age. The mobility of children is just below average. <sup>1</sup> The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is just above average at 21 per cent and two children have a statement of special educational need. The school is an Eco-friendly school and has the silver award.

<sup>1</sup> The mobility of children refers to the proportion of children who start or leave the school at times other than at the start of the Reception year or the end of Year 6.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features, in which the children achieve well and standards are above average overall in Year 6. The school has exceptional leadership and excellent procedures to evaluate its own performance, which match the inspectors' views of the school very closely. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. High standards have been maintained and there have been significant developments in assessing and tracking how well pupils are doing, in monitoring how well the school is doing and in teaching and learning, in particular the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT). Teaching and learning are good. This results in standards in reading, mathematics and science that are well above average. In writing they are average. Care, support and guidance of the children are outstanding and as a result, children behave well and their personal development is good. The curriculum, including provision in the Foundation Stage (2), is good. Key strengths of the provision include the positive relationships between staff and children, enrichment of the curriculum and the use of new technology. Links with other agencies and schools are good. Areas for improvement are standards of pupils' writing, which were a key issue at the last inspection, and consultation with parents. The school has very good capacity to improve owing to the highly effective leadership, governance and management at all levels. It provides good value for money.

(2) The Foundation Stage in this school consists of the nursery and two Reception classes.

### What the school should do to improve further

The school has already recognised it needs to:

- raise standards of children's writing by, for instance, giving more attention to children's early attempts at writing in the Foundation Stage and providing stimulating opportunities for all children to write at length;
- further develop consultation with parents so that they are better informed about and involved in decision-making.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

The children get a good start in the Foundation Stage. In both the nursery and Reception years, from well below average starting points, the children make good strides in all areas of learning, though skills of early writing are not so well developed. Most children achieve all the expected learning goals by the end of the Reception year, except in some aspects of reading and writing. Children build well on their learning to attain standards by the end of Year 2 that are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics but this varies according to the nature of the year group. Children continue to achieve well in Key Stage 2, especially in reading, mathematics and science. Consequently standards are frequently well above average in Year 6. Achievement in

writing is satisfactory overall and standards are close to the national average. These judgements are confirmed by statistical information about the school's performance and unpublished results of the 2005 national tests. The school has identified that the children's writing is the most important aspect to develop and inspectors confirm that there is scope for standards to be higher. The school is very successful in achieving the challenging targets it sets. Children also achieve well in ICT. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and often their achievement in tests in Year 6 is significantly better than might be expected. The very few children learning English as an additional language also make good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Children really enjoy coming to school and have excellent attitudes towards learning. They say that 'teachers make their lessons fun.' They enjoy learning and report that they look forward to taking part in the extensive range of extra-curricular activities. Behaviour is good overall. Many children behave very well and this contributes strongly to the overall progress they make. A minority of children present challenging behaviour and the school has good systems to improve it. The very good relationships that exist between staff and children and amongst the children themselves ensure that they are happy and confident. As they get older, the children develop a mature sense of responsibility and are keen to serve the community. For example, older children willingly carry out duties to help younger ones. The school successfully encourages the children to think carefully about healthy lifestyles and exercise. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well and the school has good links with the local churches. Amongst the many charities supported by the school, practical aid is given to an orphanage in Africa. The children's self-esteem is nurtured effectively and they show respect and care for others. Their attendance is in line with the national average and exclusion rates are low. The children's good standards, attitudes and cooperation with others are good foundations for future success in the workplace.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Strengths of the teaching include the relationships between staff and children and how well the staff use the school's behaviour policy to promote good behaviour among children. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to learning. All staff make very good use of new technology, such as interactive whiteboards, to enhance learning and maintain the children's interest. Three excellent lessons were observed, all of which provided exceptional levels of challenge that the children responded to very well. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support. Staff have identified the need to improve skills of writing and there were some good examples of work designed well to stimulate the children, especially boys, to write well. Further opportunities to stimulate writing

are required to push up standards and children's writing in the Foundation Stage needs to be promoted better. Procedures to assess the children's progress, to track their achievement and to set clear targets are very thorough. Some are recent developments and have yet to be embedded fully but staff are using them very well to match their teaching with children's attainment. There are some good examples of marking of pupils' work but this good practice is not evident in all classes.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum matches the needs of the pupils well and all statutory requirements are met. The school is developing the quality of the curriculum well. Work is enhanced by opportunities to take part in educational visits, including visits to local businesses. Focused weeks covering creative arts, physical activities, science and technology are held, the latter involving links with the construction industry. Residential visits provide children with the opportunity to experience many adventurous activities. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities are popular with the children. There are good links with many local organisations, and children take part in a wide range of community activities. Provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, though the children's involvement in their reviews and target setting has yet to be formalised. The school has been awarded an Eco Friendly Silver Award and is currently working towards a Healthy Schools Award. Initiatives include a travel plan, which encourages walking to school.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Care, support and guidance are exceptional. The school's pastoral provision supports and reinforces the children's academic, emotional and personal development very well. Children have a good understanding of their own learning needs and are clearly aware of their targets. The school strongly promotes their health and well-being, by providing them with good opportunities for physical exercise through lessons, extra-curricular activities and very good provision in the playgrounds. Adults use praise and encouragement effectively and children respond very well. Children report that they feel valued and there is always someone to talk to if they have a problem. Effective child protection and health and safety procedures are fully in place. Arrangements for settling new children into the Foundation stage are good. Over the years the school has worked very hard to provide the children with clean and healthy facilities, in spite of the age of the building.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher has established a clear vision for the school and is very well supported by a very able and enthusiastic leadership team. There is a clear focus on improving teaching and learning

and, consequently, standards are high. Regular and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school by managers at all levels are particular strengths. The senior leadership team maintains a strategic overview of performance and this indicates a clear capacity for further improvement. Teachers are well supported and expectations are high. Objectives to improve the performance of teachers are clearly linked to school improvement and raising achievement. The extremely well-informed governors both challenge and support the school and are knowledgeable about standards and performance. They have a clear understanding of the issues central to school improvement. The school values the contributions made by all children and encourages them to succeed and overcome barriers to learning, and governors are consulted about aspects of school provision. However, the school has identified greater parental consultation as an area for development. The vast majority of parents are very satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school but a small minority have a few concerns, which improved consultation would go a long way to address. The budget is carefully managed and a three-year financial plan is securely in place to reduce the previous budget surplus while giving attention to the fall in the school roll. Value for money is good.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for your help when we inspected your school and please pass on our thanks to the other children we met and spoke to while we were at school. We enjoyed our visit very much. Now we want to share with you what we thought about your school.

There are many things that are good in your school and that you can feel proud of, for instance:

- the staff in your school take excellent care of you all and teach you well
- you work hard and it is clear that you enjoy school
- we were impressed with how well you are doing in reading, mathematics, science and ICT
- you are all growing into sensible students and we liked the way you take on jobs in school and look after one another
- the staff provide you with good opportunities to learn about living in a healthy, safe way as well as the chance to enjoy activities and clubs after school and to go on trips.

We are suggesting just a few things for your staff to do:

- we want them to help you to do better in writing so that you become as good at writing as you are at reading
- we want them to consult with your parents more so that they can get more involved in making decisions about the school.