



St Marie's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104466
LEA Knowsley
Inspection number 277165
Inspection dates 30 November 2005 to 1 December 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Paul Bamber CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bigdale Drive
School category	Voluntary aided		Northwood
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Kirkby, Liverpool L33 6XL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 477 8480
Number on roll	222	Fax number	0151 477 8481
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr W Mushrow
Date of previous inspection	18 September 2000	Headteacher	Mrs P Cooney

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors over 2 days.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school with 205 children on roll of whom 23 attend part-time in the Nursery. The ratio of boys to girls is higher than that found nationally. The school is located in an area which is three and a half times more deprived than average and has been identified as one of the most needy in Europe. Around two-fifths of the children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is twice the average and an average number have a statement of need. Attainment on entry is very low.

The school offers a considerable number of additional services to parents and the community. It has the Basic Skills Quality Award, an Artsmark and Investors in People Award, all gained in 2004.

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 outstanding features. In most respects, inspectors agree with the school's evaluation of its performance. However, inspectors judge the children's personal development and well-being and the care and support provided for both the children and their parents as outstanding rather than good. This is a school in which inclusion is at the heart of what it does and in which all are highly valued. Relationships are extremely good and children respect very much the feelings and opinions of others. Children feel very safe and secure, enjoying their education greatly. The staff carefully nurture each child and consequently the children develop extremely well, behave increasingly maturely and sensitively take responsibility for others. Children's academic achievement is good. They enter the school with very low attainment and leave the school with broadly average standards, having made good progress. Their progress is best in writing and least good for the more-able children, especially in reading and mathematics. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Good teaching contributes well to children's achievements and particularly to their outstanding personal development. Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher's outstanding leadership contributes very significantly to a strong sense of community and teamwork and to the excellent partnerships the school has established, especially with parents. The school has improved well since the last inspection and has good capacity to improve. The school offers good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that more-able children make the same good progress in reading and mathematics, as all other children in the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the school with very low standards, especially in their ability to communicate, in their understanding of number and in their personal and social skills. They make good progress in both the Nursery and Reception classes, but still enter Year 1 at well below expected standards in their communication skills and mathematical development.

Children continue to make good progress, but attain below average standards in national tests by the end of Year 2, particularly in reading and mathematics. Data indicates that over the past two years most of the children have progressed well or very well in reading and writing. In 2005, children in Key Stage 2 made progress in reading, writing and mathematics which was significantly higher than that found nationally. Whilst children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those of average ability achieve very well, progress for the more-able in Key Stage 2 has only been satisfactory in reading and mathematics. The school's concentrated focus on raising the children's attainment in literacy has paid rich dividends in significantly improving their writing skills. It is in this area that more-able children do best. The

percentage attaining the higher Level 3 in the Year 2, 2005 national tests in writing was above the national average. In the Year 6, 2005 national tests standards were below average overall. An average proportion of children reached both the expected level and Level 5 in writing. Although a broadly average proportion of children reached the expected levels in English, mathematics and science, the proportion of children reaching the higher level in reading and mathematics was well below average. The school sets challenging targets and invariably meets them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children make excellent progress in all aspects of their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many start in the Nursery with very limited social skills. Because of the outstanding care and support children receive throughout the school, they become exceptionally mature students, displaying excellent co-operative behaviour. Children have a real interest in lessons especially in the upper year groups. Although many younger children find difficulty concentrating in lessons, children's behaviour improves significantly during their time in school as a result of the very effective behaviour management by the staff. Children have excellent opportunities to develop skills of citizenship, for example they help to interview candidates for teaching posts in their school. Older children help the younger ones through the Play Leader scheme at playtimes and the School Council is very involved in decision-making.

Children develop an excellent awareness of safety, healthy living and the importance of community in their lives, for example through achieving the Mayor's Award. There are various highly regarded rewards for good attendance and punctuality which have had a very positive impact. The children are keen that their class achieves the best attendance of the week and this has translated into improvements in overall attendance. Attendance is now in line with the average of most schools nationally.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good throughout the school. Staff are very effective in establishing warm relationships with children and managing their behaviour very positively. As a result, the children, many of whom have learning or emotional difficulties, grow into increasingly confident learners who achieve well. Children said 'teachers get you involved in activities and make you feel at home'. In the outstanding lessons observed, children were rapt in their attention because teachers matched activities precisely to meet the needs of all children. For example, in a Year 2 literacy lesson, children's involvement in practical activities greatly enhanced their enjoyment and engagement and promoted their skills to write precise instructions. Throughout the school, teachers organise lessons well for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for

those of average ability. At times more-able children are not provided with enough opportunity to progress as quickly as they should.

Children are very eager learners. In Years 3 to 6 especially, they pay close attention to the teachers, follow instructions promptly and have inquisitive minds. They work very well with each other and have a good knowledge of what they need to do to improve. Teachers help children understand the latter by sharing and reviewing targets with them and marking work rigorously. Support staff are particularly effective in ensuring the good progress made by the children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly those with a statement of need.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The range and quality of the curriculum are good, meeting the needs of most children well and giving especially good support to those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, more could be done to plan for and meet the needs of the more-able children. Basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are covered well, helping most of the children to achieve well.

Through the good curriculum, for their personal development children gain a good knowledge of safe practices including awareness of the importance of establishing good relationships and of the dangers of the misuse of substances. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is also good and helps them to make good progress. Creative subjects, including art and design and music, are given good prominence. There is a good range of out of school activities and of physical activities both in lessons and after school.

The school makes good use of specialist teaching and partnerships with other schools, for example by teaching French and Spanish to children in Years 4 to 6. Effective use is made of specialist teaching in music and sport from outside agencies. Themed weeks, for example, in art, business and science, enrich the children's learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's care for the children is outstanding. All staff are sensitive to their needs, especially the most vulnerable, and parents indicate how confident they feel with the safety and well-being of their children while they are in school. The staff take particular care to include all children in every aspect of school life. Partnerships with outside services and with parents promote the well-being of the children exceptionally well. Child protection procedures are robust, health and safety issues are reviewed and addressed rigorously and the school is kept very clean. Recent improvements to the building help to make the school an even more attractive and comfortable place for the children. Staff know the children and chart their individual needs very well. However, staff should identify and plan for the needs of the more-able children more

rigorously. A recent focus in the school development plan on improving the children's independence in learning is bearing fruit, especially for the older children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership, especially in promoting a strong sense of community and teamwork. She has been especially strong in establishing highly effective partnerships, especially with parents and in rigorously pursuing higher standards and achievement. Over recent years, the school has reached out increasingly to the local community and played an important role in initiating opportunities for parents to continue their education, to hone their parenting skills and to play a much more active role in supporting their children's learning. Children have greatly benefited from these partnerships. Attendance is much better, their achievements and standards steadily improve and their attitudes to learning are much more positive. The significant decrease in vandalism experienced by the school is testament to the high regard in which it is held by the community.

Other senior managers contribute well to the school's good provision, with particularly telling contributions from the deputy headteacher in the analysis of the school's performance and the literacy coordinator in the promotion of significant improvements in children's writing. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. The provision for the many children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well managed. However, the school has not been so rigorous in ensuring that the more-able children achieve higher levels in reading and mathematics. The governors carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. The school is mostly accurate and realistic in its self evaluation, being slightly modest in underestimating those features which inspectors judge to be outstanding. However, the record of good improvement since the last inspection and its current priorities for development, indicate the school's good capacity to improve further.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	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

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

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	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	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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 for making us so welcome during the two days we spent in your school. We really appreciated the open and frank way in which you chatted to us and let us know so many interesting things about your school. We would like to share with you those things we thought were good about the school and those things we felt it could do a bit better.

What we liked most about your school:

- that you make good, steady improvements in your work because you are taught well
- the school helps you to become increasingly grown up and well behaved
- the lovely way in which the teachers and other adults look after you, to make sure that you are happy, healthy, safe and secure.

What we think the school could be doing better:

- to help those of you who are in the top groups to improve at the same good rate as all the other children.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. We hope that you continue to enjoy school and do well with your work and carry on trying really hard to improve.