



Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104633
LEA Liverpool
Inspection number 277195
Inspection dates 29 March 2006 to 30 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Frank Carruthers CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Fontenoy Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Liverpool
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Merseyside L3 2DU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 236 9505
Number on roll	137	Fax number	0151 233 4237
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr M Smith
Date of previous inspection	3 April 2000	Headteacher	Mrs E Holleran

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

This small inner city school serves an area of very high social disadvantage. The attainment of the children on entry to the Nursery is well below average and frequently very low in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy. Almost a third of children on the school roll have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is above the average of schools nationally. Very few children are from minority ethnic backgrounds or at the early stages of learning English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an improving school; its effectiveness is satisfactory. There are a number of good features and a few outstanding ones. These findings match the school's views. Standards are improving, as is children's achievement, though both have been affected by underperformance in recent years caused by high turnover of staff and some unsatisfactory teaching. These difficulties have been recently resolved under the vigorous direction of the headteacher and the school has good capacity to improve. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and standards in Year 6 are broadly average. Key features of the school are the good quality of its leadership, management and governance, including school self-evaluation, the care, guidance and support given to the children, the enrichment activities in the curriculum and the outstanding partnerships with other schools, agencies and institutions. Children's personal development and behaviour are good. Provision in the Foundation Stage has improved in recent terms and is good. Aspects to improve are: the achievement of more able children; the expectations and performance of boys; the standards of writing; and the levels of attendance. Improvement since the last inspection has been good despite a period of significant upheaval, which included the threat of closure. The newly established senior leadership team is making a significant impact on raising the expectations of all staff. The budget currently has a 10% deficit, mainly the result of difficulties outside the school's control, but there are clear plans to bring it into balance. The cost of educating a child at the school is in line with other small schools and the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement, particularly of boys and the more able pupils.
- Improve standards of writing and use opportunities to write in subjects other than English.
- Address the recent decline in levels of attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children's achievement is satisfactory overall, which reflects a measure of past underachievement and recent improvements in current classes. The staff are working to overcome the legacy of this past underachievement but the impact is yet to be fully realised in children's achievement. The attainment of the children on entry to the nursery is well below average. In the nursery and Reception classes, many children are now achieving well, though standards are still below average. Standards in Year 2 declined in recent years but they are lifting again in the current Year 2 because of action taken to improve teaching. They are now broadly average. Standards overall in Year 6 have risen since the last inspection but some year groups have been affected adversely by disruptions to teaching and learning and some children underperformed. Good teaching and effective intervention strategies, such as extra classes in basic

skills, are raising standards in the current Year 6 so that they are broadly average. Improvements are needed to raise the standards of writing and the performance of boys and more able children. Children in Year 6 are on target to reach better standards this year and meet their challenging targets. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because of good levels of support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

All aspects of the children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. The school promotes a fit and healthy lifestyle well and children respond positively. They enjoy school very much because of the enriched curriculum and good relationships with the staff. They say, 'Teachers help you and explain things if you get stuck with your work.' Levels of attendance have matched the national average in recent years and are better than local averages. There has been a decline in the current year, however, which has been identified by school. The behaviour of the children is good. Many start school with poor levels of attention, and some are aggressive and have poor social skills. They make good progress as a result of good behaviour management. Parents and children report that incidents of bullying are infrequent and children know what to do if they feel they are being bullied. The children have good opportunities to be involved in the social and cultural community of the inner city area they live in. They learn good habits of regular attendance and punctuality and learn basic skills, though more needs to be done to develop boys' skills of writing and spelling especially.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning has been inconsistent in recent years, caused in part by above average levels of staff turnover. There is a recent, marked improvement in the quality of teaching but this is yet to have a full impact on children's achievement. Inconsistencies have affected the quality in most year groups except in Year 6 and have led to some underperformance. Strong features of the teaching include relationships between staff and children; expectations for what the children can achieve, which have been increased significantly with the incoming headteacher; and the quality of behaviour management. The teaching of children with additional needs is never less than good because of good quality teaching by a part-time specialist and good support from teaching assistants. Unsatisfactory teaching has been eliminated and the school has begun to address aspects to improve, such as the need to promote better writing and to improve the expectations and performance of boys and more able children. The school identified that boys were not doing well in reading and has taken positive steps to motivate them through access to more appealing fiction and non-fiction books and bringing in good role models for reading. A recent focus on

more opportunities for speaking and listening is helping children to have more ideas for writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. It contributes well to the children's health and safety and is an important factor in promoting their personal development. Previous shortcomings, such as the quality of the curriculum in the Foundation Stage, have been addressed well so that children in the Reception class now receive an appropriate curriculum. A key strength is the enrichment of the curriculum through the 'creative curriculum', where there are good opportunities to develop the children's interest through visitors to school, visits to theatres, galleries and museums and residential experiences. The range of clubs and out-of-school activities is outstanding. Children are excited by the success they have achieved in tournaments with other schools and really enjoy the coaching they receive in a range of sports. Links with outside providers are an outstanding feature of this enrichment, helping to develop the children's self-esteem and confidence to say, 'I could do as well as this'. Provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for children are good with some outstanding features, which include support for vulnerable children and those at risk. The school has a good reputation for giving a second chance to children excluded from other schools. All staff are fully committed to this and, for example, have received training to give guidance to children who are affected by bereavement. All elements of child protection, health, safety and risk assessment are dealt with conscientiously and effectively by governors and staff. There are good systems to track the personal as well as academic development of children, though some are newly established and their full value is yet to have an impact on raising the achievement of all children, for example the more able. Outstanding links with outside agencies, including the school psychological service, behaviour management team and the education welfare service, provide very good support for vulnerable children and those with additional learning needs. The quality of diagnosis and assessment procedures for these children is outstanding.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership, management and governance of the school are good and this has been the result of the work of the dynamic headteacher, who has rung the changes by example and commitment. She has won the support and the commitment of staff in her high ambition and expectation for the school, so that the senior leadership team, staff and governors all share this vision and are working effectively to promote it. Many recent improvements have been the result of good monitoring by the headteacher

and better training for staff, including support staff. As a result, standards, achievement and the quality of teaching and learning are all improving. The school's self-evaluation process is good because all staff and governors are involved and information about the school's performance is considered carefully. Strengths and weaknesses are identified and the good school improvement plan focuses clearly on raising standards. Strategies are put into action effectively. Several intervention strategies, such as homework clubs, are underway and there is now a need to keep them under review to gauge their effectiveness. Governors have a good awareness of the school's performance because of the information they receive from the senior leadership team. They are increasingly effective in challenging senior staff about issues of achievement and provision. Consultation with parents to promote the school's development has also improved under the leadership team and is now good. Despite a difficult period of threatened closure, high staff turnover as well as a recent fire, the school has made good improvements, especially in its ethos of working to support vulnerable children and promoting higher expectations. It has 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?	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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?	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	2	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	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?	2	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	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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 your help when I inspected your school. I enjoyed my visit very much. Now I want to share with you what I found out about your school.

These are some of the things that are good in your school:

- you have a dynamic headteacher who is constantly doing her best to make your school a better place to learn in
- the staff take good care of you and help you all to be fit, safe and healthy
- your behaviour is good and you are all growing into sensible students who want to learn and find out
- the staff provide you with great opportunities for learning through visiting galleries and museums, having visitors to teach and coach you, as well as providing activities and clubs after school.

There are some important things for your headteacher and staff to do to make the school even better:

- to do as much as they can to help boys to do better in school subjects
- to help the more able children to achieve as much as they can
- to improve the writing of all the children
- to improve the levels of attendance and punctuality of the children, which have got worse this year.

With best wishes to you all for the future.