



St Nicholas's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104657
LEA Liverpool
Inspection number 277200
Inspection dates 24 May 2006 to 25 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Michael McIlroy HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Orthes Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Liverpool
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Merseyside L3 5XF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 7095532
Number on roll	194	Fax number	0151 7088330
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Professor K Holden
Date of previous inspection	22 May 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Anne Edmondson

Age group 3 to 11	Inspection dates 24 May 2006 - 25 May 2006	Inspection number 277200
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is below average in size and serves an inner-city area of Liverpool, which has more than three times the level of social disadvantage found nationally. Approximately 40% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Over half of pupils are of minority ethnic origin and over 40% have English as an additional language (EAL). A small minority of pupils are from families of overseas students who are studying locally. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is below average and few have a statement of special educational need. The school has strong links with the local church. Over the past year the school has undergone considerable changes in staffing.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and has a number of good features.

Pupils enter the school with standards in learning below that found nationally. They make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage and good progress by the end of Key Stage 1. In recent years, pupils in Key Stage 2 have not achieved as well as they might have. However, last year there was an improvement in pupils' overall achievement and most pupils made satisfactory progress. Evidence seen during inspection suggests that this improvement is continuing.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The majority of teachers are new to the school and changes in staffing have concerned some parents. The headteacher has provided strong leadership during this unsettled period and has worked hard to ensure continuity in learning and to improve standards. However, there is inconsistency in how some school policies, such as assessment procedures, are applied. Some aspects of middle management, notably subject leadership, are underdeveloped. Governance is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some good features. The personal development and well-being of pupils is good. The behaviour of most pupils is good. The curriculum is satisfactory, as is the care, guidance and support that pupils receive. Pastoral support for pupils is good, but not all receive enough academic guidance.

The school has the capacity to improve further and offers satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure stability in staffing.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching in the school.
- Develop the roles of the new leadership team and of subject managers.
- Improve assessment procedures so that pupils receive better academic guidance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school judges the achievement and standards of pupils to be satisfactory. This matches the view of the inspectors.

Pupils enter the school with levels of skills and knowledge in learning which are below average. They make satisfactory progress overall in the Foundation Stage and by the end of this key stage a majority achieve the early learning goals set them.

In 2005, the standards achieved by pupils in the Key Stage 1 assessments matched the national average. Pupils did much better in reading and mathematics than in writing. The most recent assessments indicate that standards have risen further. When pupils' low starting point is taken into consideration, this represents good progress.

Pupils make slower progress in Key Stage 2. In 2003 and 2004, the achievement of pupils was significantly below that made by similar pupils nationally, although the 2004 results showed an improvement. In 2005 the progress made by pupils improved again, although fewer pupils achieved as well as they could have in science. Most pupils achieved satisfactorily, including those with LDD and EAL. More able pupils achieved above average results.

The school achieved most of its targets in 2005. Evidence gathered during the inspection, and data provided by the school, suggest that this improvement is currently being sustained.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils is good. The spiritual, social, moral and cultural aspects of school life are well developed through assemblies and the school's welcoming and caring ethos. Pupils are given time to reflect on issues and have

a well-developed sense of right and wrong. The school is a successful community of many nationalities. One parent commented that it has a 'good understanding' of the needs of pupils from abroad.

Pupils show their commitment to racial equality in the harmonious way in which they work and play together. They are polite and courteous to visitors. The behaviour of most

pupils is good, but occasionally some pupils are allowed to distract others from learning. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn.

Pupils know how to keep safe and who to talk to in the event of any bullying. They are

aware of the dangers of hazardous substances and of the healthy lifestyle choices they can make regarding food and exercise. For example, some choose to drink water in class. Pupils play sensibly at break times and many take advantage of the sporting opportunities offered to them.

Pupils make a positive contribution to the school and wider community. The school council is very effective. It has suggested improvements to playground facilities which have benefited all pupils. Future economic skills are developed through opportunities to

organise and participate in charity fundraising. Their efforts have helped the school achieve 'Fair Trade' status.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall and some is good. In the best teaching, work was carefully tailored to match pupils' abilities and expectations were high. Teachers set out clearly what pupils were to learn and lessons were interesting, fast-paced and stimulating. Consequently, pupils listened carefully and knew what was expected of them. For example, in one good science lesson on healthy eating, clear instructions by the teacher were followed by purposeful and enthusiastic discussions by young pupils as they swiftly and accurately categorised a wide range of foods.

Otherwise satisfactory teaching was characterised by a lack of pace, limited use of resources and a lack of challenge for some learners. These caused the rate of learning to slow. Occasionally, weak behaviour management allowed some pupils to become inattentive and distract others from their learning.

Pupils with LDD and those with EAL are well supported in their learning by a specialist teacher and extra teaching assistants. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and in some classes pupils made effective use of strategies to assess their own learning. There are systems in place to track the progress of pupils, but these are not always adhered to.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. This matches the school's judgement. It is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. It meets the needs of pupils, including those with EAL. There is an appropriate focus on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are satisfactorily developed. Spanish is taught to a number of year groups. Homework is set to extend learning. Some older pupils benefit from occasional homework clubs.

Learning is enriched by visits to local museums and sites of historical interest, such as the local docks. Year 6 and Year 2 pupils benefit from residential visits. Pupils' experiences are further enhanced by visitors, such as dance and theatre troupes, and by themed weeks, such as 'health week'. Pupils with LDD are included in all activities and the school provides some enrichment opportunities for more able pupils. There are a number of sports clubs, such as football, badminton and netball and other clubs such as drama, dance and digital photography.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school judges the care, guidance and support which pupils receive to be good. Inspectors found it to be satisfactory.

Pupils are well supervised in and around school. Staff readily help pupils if they are hurt or upset. Additionally, pupil advocates also care and help other pupils. The Pastoral Care leader provides good support to vulnerable pupils. Robust child protection procedures are in place. Risks are carefully assessed to ensure the safety of pupils on educational visits. New pupils are carefully inducted into school life.

Academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory. Pupils receive targets to work towards but not all are sure of what they are. Marking is generally regular and positive, but too often it does not provide pupils with enough guidance on the next steps needed to improve their work.

Individual education plans are in place for pupils with LDD, but there is scope for involving parents and pupils more in the review of these. Systems for the early identification of pupils with LDD are underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school judges leadership and management to be satisfactory overall and inspectors agree. The headteacher provides strong leadership. She has led the school through a period of considerable staffing change. Staffing is not yet stable and this concerns some parents. Throughout this difficult time she has sought to ensure that standards in learning are maintained and improved. A new management team has only recently been formed which is starting to move the school forward. Robust systems exist to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher has tackled weaknesses in teaching determinedly. However, opportunities for new staff to observe good practice are limited. Strategies such as booster classes, and the deployment of extra support staff with appropriate foreign language skills, have contributed to the improvement in achievement. Assessment information is used to identify 'focus groups' of pupils who are at risk of underachieving. The headteacher has placed a strong emphasis on developing pupils' personal development through initiatives such as the 'behaviour for learning' programme.

The headteacher's self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is broadly accurate. She knows its strengths and where it needs to improve. Issues identified in the last inspection report have been satisfactorily addressed.

Middle management is satisfactory. Key staff, such as the co-ordinators for special educational needs and assessment, provide sound leadership, as does the Foundation and Key Stage 1 leader. Subject leadership is underdeveloped. A new system of organising subject teams has been slow to develop, partly because of staffing discontinuity. Core subject leaders are aware of the major strengths and weaknesses in their subjects, but some do not yet monitor teaching of their subject. Not all subject managers scrutinise the work of pupils in their subject. This is partly because a number of them are new to their role following the recent staffing changes.

The school consults parents on major developments but would like to be consulted more. Governance is satisfactory. Governors provide support for the headteacher but

there is scope for greater involvement in the work of the school. The school has the capacity to improve and provides satisfactory value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

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?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	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	3	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	3	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	3	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?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	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	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 being so courteous and helpful when we inspected your school recently. Here are a few of the best things we saw:

- You enjoy school and work and play together very well.
- You are very well cared for.
- Some of you are 'pupil advocates'.
- The behaviour of most of you is good.
- You have a very effective school council.
- You have lots of interesting clubs to take part in.

We have asked your headteacher, governors and staff to make some changes in order to make things even better for you at school. These are:

- to make staffing more stable
- make all teaching as good as the best
- to provide more training for teachers to help them carry out the jobs they do in school, outside the classroom
- to change marking so that you know what to do in order to get better at your work.

Once again, many thanks for your help and politeness during our visit to your school.