



# St Cecilia's Catholic Infant School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 104677  
**Local Authority** Liverpool  
**Inspection number** 277203  
**Inspection dates** 14–15 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Michael McIlroy HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Snaefell Avenue
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Tuebrook, Liverpool
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7		Merseyside L13 7HB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 2202153
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	199	<b>Fax number</b>	0151 2590365
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Fr M Madden
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs M Buckley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 October 2000		

<b>Age group</b> 3–7	<b>Inspection dates</b> 14–15 November 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 277203
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

The school is below average in size and is situated in an area which experiences twice the level of social and economic deprivation found nationally. The number of pupils of minority ethnic origin is below average and very few speak English as an additional language. Around a quarter of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average.

The school holds a number of awards, including the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Healthy Schools Charter Mark.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where the headteacher's aim of excellence and enjoyment in learning and good personal development for all pupils is fully realised.

Pupils enter the school with standards in skills and learning which are below average overall, and in some cases well below. They make excellent progress in the very well organised and managed Foundation Stage. This very good progress continues in Key Stage 1. By the time they leave the school the standards attained by pupils are above average. Pupils achieve most strongly in reading and writing but do less well in mathematics. When the low starting point of pupils is taken into consideration this represents outstanding progress in learning.

The success of the school is due in large part to the very high expectations, clear vision and unrelenting determination of the headteacher for pupils to achieve highly. Her outstanding leadership has developed a highly effective team which shares the common goal of creating a secure, tranquil, but purposeful climate where pupils thrive both in terms of learning and personal development. The senior management team provides excellent leadership. Good leadership is also provided by subject managers and the supportive governing body.

Crucial to the pupils' academic success is their outstanding personal development and well-being. This is fostered from their first days in the school and results in very good behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils confidently express their ideas and are tolerant of the views of others. They are happy, enthusiastic and confident learners. They listen well, reflect maturely on their work and are eager to improve. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and make a positive contribution to the local and school community. The school council is articulate but there is scope to extend its role in the school's development. Attendance is satisfactory.

Teaching is outstanding overall. It is firmly anchored on the careful use of detailed assessment data, the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve and the involvement of pupils in assessing their own learning. Exemplary use of skilled teaching assistants further promotes learning. The outstanding care, guidance and support provided by the school ensures that pupils feel safe and secure. They receive good guidance on how to improve their work and are encouraged to reflect on how they can improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make very good progress in their learning. This is also true of the more able pupils.

The carefully designed and broad curriculum excellently meets the needs of pupils. Its focus on thinking skills and innovative philosophy lessons contribute strongly to pupils' ability to reason, question and explore.

The school knows itself well, although it is modest in its judgement of its overall effectiveness. All issues arising from the last inspection have been fully tackled. The school's impressive track record and its outstanding leadership mean that it is well placed to improve still further.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Further develop provision in mathematics so that all pupils achieve their full potential.
- Extend the role played by pupils, including the school council, in the further development of the school.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are below the average expected for their age. Some are well below. The excellent provision in the Foundation Stage enables pupils to make very good progress. A strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' personal, social and language skills. By the end of their time in the Foundation Stage, most have made very good progress towards achieving the Early Learning Goals expected of them.

This excellent progress continues in Key Stage 1. In 2003, the overall standards achieved by pupils in the national assessments for pupils aged seven were just below average. They soared in 2004 and, although they declined in 2005 from this high point, they remained above average. The most recent national assessments indicate that standards have risen again. Pupils performed most strongly in reading and writing, where standards were above the average in both 2004 and 2005. In the assessments for writing in 2005, nearly twice as many pupils achieved the higher Level 3 as is the case nationally. They do less well in mathematics, where standards in 2005 were average. Nonetheless, given pupils' low starting point on entry to the school, this represents outstanding progress.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

The school judges pupils' personal development and well-being to be outstanding and inspectors agree. From the moment pupils enter the Foundation Stage the school does its utmost to develop their social and learning skills. This consistently applied approach, reinforced by very good relationships between staff and pupils, successfully creates well-rounded and highly motivated individuals. Throughout the school pupils display very good attitudes to work. They are confident and enthusiastic learners who enjoy school greatly. Their behaviour, both in class and around school, is exemplary.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is very well developed within the framework of the school's strong Catholic ethos. They work and play very well together and are quick to support one another. Pupils know how to keep safe and how to stay healthy and alert. One group of pupils enthusiastically demonstrated a 'shake up and wake up session' which they reported 'really gets us going'.

Pupils make a good contribution to their local community, through, for example, charity fund-raising for CAFOD. Older pupils have the opportunity to serve on the school

council, which is becoming used to its role. There is scope to increase the role of the council, and of other pupils, in the school's future development.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that teaching and learning are outstanding.

Detailed assessment data and strong subject knowledge are very well used by teachers to plan challenging lessons. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are very high. Lessons build on what pupils have learnt previously and are interwoven with links to other subjects. For instance, in one outstanding literacy lesson the previously studied story of Guy Fawkes was well used to support learning. Stimulating resources are well prepared. Teaching is fast-paced and no time is wasted in lessons. Exemplary use is made of skilled teaching assistants to support and extend learners. Very good questioning by teachers challenges pupils to explain their thinking. Intervention strategies and additional staff are very well used to target underachievement and to extend the learning of more able pupils.

Pupils are enthusiastic and attentive learners. They know their targets and understand clearly what they have to do. They are confident and answer and ask questions willingly. Older pupils give careful thought to their answers. Pupils often assess their own work and this helps them understand how well they have achieved and how they can improve. All groups of pupils achieve very well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The school's curriculum is outstanding. It is broad, balanced and varied. In the Foundation Stage, a key priority is the development of pupils' listening, speaking and social skills through role play in areas such as the 'baby clinic' and the 'doctor's surgery'. The curriculum's emphasis on pupils' personal skills and its strong focus on literacy and numeracy mean that it meets the needs of learners. Other subjects are taught through carefully designed topics and useful links between subjects are imaginatively exploited to make learning more stimulating and relevant for pupils.

Pupils have the opportunity to learn French. There is also a strong focus on developing pupils' thinking skills. This, and the innovative philosophy lessons, strongly develops their reasoning, speaking and questioning skills. Learning is further enriched through a good range of visits, for example, to Croxteth Park, and through visiting speakers, such as the Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside. There are some extra-curricular activities for pupils, such as the digital imaging club.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

The school takes excellent care of its pupils. The high degree of trust between pupils and staff means that pupils know who to turn to if they need help or have worries. Rare instances of bullying or misbehaviour are swiftly and effectively dealt with. Child protection procedures are robust. Pupils' safety is carefully considered. For example, pupils go in pairs when they move around the school. They are very well supervised in and around the school. Good induction procedures enable pupils to settle quickly and successfully into the Foundation Stage. Separate induction arrangements facilitate a smooth transfer for pupils into Key Stage 1. Pupils, and parents, confirm that the school prepares them very well for the next stage of their education.

Academic guidance is very good. Work is marked thoroughly and pupils are informed how to improve. Older children know their targets and are involved in setting them. Even the youngest children have appropriate targets to help them improve their work and behaviour. Pupils are encouraged, from their earliest days in school, to reflect on their work and behaviour and how they can improve. The very careful tracking of pupils' progress is a major strength of the school. It enables accurate identification of underperformance and the planning and evaluation of intervention strategies. Very good support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities by teaching assistants and outside agencies. One parent praised the support her child had received and added that the school had kept her, 'fully informed and supported throughout'.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The school judges its leadership and management to be good. Inspectors found it to be outstanding. The headteacher, ably assisted by her deputy, provides outstanding leadership for the school. Her very clear vision for the school is one of excellence and enjoyment in learning, based on pupils' good personal development.

The headteacher's relentless determination to enable pupils to achieve academically and her sharp focus on continual improvement contribute directly to the exceptional progress pupils make and the good standards achieved. The school plans and evaluates its actions very carefully. Its assessment of its effectiveness is accurate, if on occasion modest. Teaching and learning are rigorously and regularly monitored, although some aspects of monitoring lack formality. Weaknesses are promptly and determinedly tackled. Results are analysed in great depth and underperformance is quickly identified. Solutions to weaknesses are carefully considered and discussed. Prompt and effective action is then taken across the whole school to bring about improvement. For example, whole-school initiatives in writing, based on careful analysis, resulted in the substantial rise in scores in this subject in 2005. All issues arising from the previous inspection have been well addressed.

The roles of staff are clearly defined and leadership is well distributed within the school. The deputy headteacher, in her roles as assessment manager and coordinator for special educational needs, also provides outstanding leadership. Both key stage managers provide very good leadership for their departments. Subject managers lead their areas well. They analyse results, know the strengths and weaknesses of their subjects and contribute to improvement through their development plans. Core subject managers monitor teaching in their subject.

Parents and pupils are consulted about the school and their responses are analysed. Parents are highly supportive of the school's work, although a few are unsure of how pupils' views are taken into account. Governance is good. Governors are very supportive and provide challenge for the headteacher. Finances are prudently administered. The school provides excellent value for money.



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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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>	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

Thank you for being so polite and welcoming to us when we inspected your school recently. We very much enjoyed our visit. I am writing to tell you what we found at your school.

Some of the best things we found were:

- your behaviour is excellent
- you are very confident and work very hard in class
- you are very well looked after by the staff
- your teachers are very good
- the headteacher leads your school very well
- your school is outstanding.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to make some changes to make things even better for you. These are to:

- help you learn even more in mathematics
- to use some of your ideas and those of the school council when making changes to the school.

Once again, many thanks for being so kind and helpful when we visited your school.