



St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104922
LEA Sefton
Inspection number 277258
Inspection dates 12 July 2006 to 13 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Michael Onyon CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Nicholas Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Blundellsands
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Liverpool, Merseyside L23 6TS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 9241204
Number on roll	195	Fax number	0151 9241204
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr John Howell
Date of previous inspection	13 September 2000	Headteacher	Miss Sara Howard

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4 to 11	12 July 2006 - 13 July 2006	277258

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Nicholas Primary School is of average size. Almost all pupils are of White British origin. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and an average number have a statement of special educational need. The children's attainment on entry is at the level expected for their age, but varies from year to year. The school holds the Activemark Gold award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Nicholas is a good school and provides good value for money. This inspection judgement is better than the school's view of itself. Parents and pupils are rightly proud of their school. They say, 'St Nicholas expects high standards of all pupils in all aspects of school life; work, discipline, appearance and social behaviour.' Pupils' personal development and the care the school provides are both of a good quality and there is a strong Christian ethos. The headteacher is improving provision through rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and leading the drive for improvement. The impact is being seen in improved standards in Key Stage 2.

From a starting point of average standards in Reception, pupils leave school at the end of Year 6 with above average standards. This represents good progress. The quality of education in the Foundation Stage is good. As a result, children progress well and attain the goals set for their ages, with some exceeding them. Overall, the good quality provision results in children having a good start to their schooling. However, the school recognises that improvements to the outdoor play area could improve children's physical development. In 2005, standards in English and science, by Year 6, were average, although those in mathematics were above average. A well focused effort has resulted in improved standards by the current Year 6 pupils. Standards are now above average, with pupils achieving well.

The quality of teaching and learning is good and in some instances it is outstanding. Support and challenge are provided for teachers enabling the best practice to be identified and shared, and any necessary improvements to be made. Some teachers do not encourage pupils to contribute to their targets for learning or suggest what they need to do to improve. The curriculum is good, having been reviewed to ensure good balance and an appropriate allocation of time for English, mathematics and science. Pupils like the good range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher was appointed in September 2005, and provides outstanding leadership with a very clear sense of purpose and direction. In a relatively short period of time, she has made improvements that have helped to raise standards, especially in Key Stage 2, and improved the quality of teaching and learning. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection and is well placed to make further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable all pupils to contribute to the setting of their learning targets so that they can understand how well they are doing and how they can do even better.
- Improve outdoor play provision for children in the Foundation Stage.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. In view of the 2005 results in Key Stage 2, the school judged standards and achievement to be satisfactory. There have been improvements this year, with standards by Year 6 above average. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. As a result, the vast majority meet, or exceed, the goals expected of them, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Basic skills in reading, writing and number are strong. Standards by Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics and science, with three-quarters of pupils reaching the higher National Curriculum level. The school exceeded its challenging targets in English and mathematics.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and gifted and talented pupils are well supported and make good progress. As a result, some pupils with learning difficulties reach average standards in national tests.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good overall. Pupils gain in maturity as they move through the school. This provides a strong basis for their learning. Pupils' personal development is built on good relationships with staff, and a wide range of experiences and activities which effectively develop pupils' confidence, self-esteem and their caring approach to each other. They know how to make healthy and safe choices, and have confidence that adults will keep them safe in school and respond to their concerns. They make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, much of which is well supported by the school's strong Christian ethos and the day-to-day example set by adults in the school. Pupils report that they enjoy school, particularly the practical and creative activities, and sport. Almost all attend regularly with attendance above average. Their attitudes to school and their behaviour are generally good, although not all pupils are able to sustain their concentration for long periods. In some lessons, these pupils become restless and their motivation declines if they are inactive for too long. Pupils are aware of the needs of others in the local and wider community, and are articulate and very comfortable in expressing their views to adults. For example, a pupil, when describing her feelings about the school said, 'they keep your dreams alive. You can always do it if you want to.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school judges the quality of teaching and learning to be satisfactory. Inspectors feel that, overall, the quality is good. The headteacher has accurately identified areas for improvement and is tackling them well. What happens in classrooms is now

effectively monitored. Good practice is shared. As a result, lessons are well planned. The needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are addressed. Teachers and classroom assistants know their pupils well. Relationships are positive. Consequently, all pupils make good progress. They enjoy learning, contribute readily to question and answer sessions, stay on task and behave well. In the best lessons, they rise eagerly to the challenging tasks set for them. They are engaged and increasingly inquisitive. They work hard. What drives learning is the teachers' high expectation of what pupils can achieve. Learning is less successful where teachers do too much of the work themselves. In these lessons, there is little to stretch the most able pupils. Pupils' achievement is regularly assessed and they are set clear targets to improve in English in Key Stage 2 and in English and mathematics in Key Stage 1. However, this practice is not consistent in all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The taught curriculum is enriched well by the contribution of visitors and the many opportunities for visits that pupils have. The current drive to raise the standards of literacy has influenced the way many subjects are taught. This has been successful in improving opportunities to use English and mathematics skills in other subjects, and in improving pupils' progress. A wide range of activities occurs in physical education lessons. The personal, social and health education programme deals with health and safety, with growing up and with the dangers of drug abuse. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Curricular links with the local high school further smooth the transition. The limited outdoor provision for children in the Foundation Stage restricts planned opportunities for play and hinders children's physical development.

Pupils and parents say how much they appreciate the wide and varied range of extra-curricular activities. At the time of the inspection, pupils in Year 6 and Year 3 were working together on a musical version of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Good residential opportunities that positively develop pupils' social skills are provided for all pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The overwhelming majority of those parents who returned questionnaires agree that the quality of care, support and guidance provided for their children is good. Pupils say they feel safe and secure and that there is always an adult they can turn to for help or advice. Vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are well supported. Consequently, they make good progress. A learning mentor boosts the self-esteem of less confident youngsters. Child protection procedures are in place and understood by all staff. Appropriate health and safety and risk assessment systems are in place. All staff are regularly checked for their suitability for working with children and their effectiveness is monitored well. Pupils in Year 6 know how well they are doing and how to improve. Other pupils in Key Stage 2 have written

literacy targets which are regularly reviewed. Their teachers, however, are less well equipped to offer guidance about their progress. Consequently, their understanding of what they need to do to improve is more limited.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Because of the dip in results at Key Stage 2 in 2005, the school was identified by the local authority as needing additional support. It has worked rigorously and successfully to improve standards and quality. It is an inclusive school, where provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well and sensitively managed. On her appointment, the headteacher quickly identified areas for improvement and her clear vision and understanding of the school's priorities has led to swift improvement. She provides outstanding leadership and the capacity for further improvement is good. Governors support the headteacher and the school well, and the chairperson has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school's own evaluation of itself is too modest and the school is better than it believes to be the case. There has been improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and the good teamwork among the staff has been decisive in managing the successes achieved thus far, although some aspects of the roles and responsibilities of senior management still require further clarification. Much is being done to develop the expertise the school needs by encouraging staff onto professional courses. Parents' and pupils' views are sought and both groups think highly about the school.

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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?	2	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	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

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	2	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?	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?	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	2	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

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your good school. It was a privilege and a pleasure for us to work with you and the staff of the school.

Yours is a good school. Some of its strengths are:

- the good progress you make in your learning
- the good curriculum, offering you lots of opportunities to learn
- your enjoyment of this happy school and the varied and interesting work that you are given
- your good behaviour and the way that you willingly take responsibility and help others
- the good quality of the teaching and learning
- the excellent way that the headteacher leads the school.

We have asked your school to involve you all in setting targets for your learning so that you know how well you are doing and how you can do even better. The school also needs a better outdoor play area for the children in Reception. You can help your teachers by continuing to do your best work and to try to do even better.