



Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 105073
LEA Wirral
Inspection number 277287
Inspection dates 6 March 2006 to 7 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Ian Thompson CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Wheatland Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Wallasey
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Merseyside CH44 7ED
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 638 3919
Number on roll	257	Fax number	0151 638 6104
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Fr J Fagan
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs R Blakemore (Acting)

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized school in an area of severe social and economic deprivation. Most pupils are of white British heritage. There are a variety of minority ethnic groups and of these a very small proportion of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion with a statement of special educational need is well below average. The acting headteacher has been in post since January 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school has too positive a view of its performance and evaluates its effectiveness as satisfactory. Inspectors judge it to be inadequate because there are significant weaknesses in pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and in the way the school is led and managed. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Teaching and learning are inadequate with the result that pupils do not make the progress that they should. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children make satisfactory and sometimes good progress and work towards the national standards expected by the end of their Reception year. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 and attain standards that are close to average. Progress slows badly in Years 3 to 6 and pupils underachieve. As a result, standards are below average. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are falling.

The school is a safe and friendly place so that most pupils are happy to be there. They are generally well behaved and enjoy learning. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory, as is the school's arrangements for their care. The curriculum is satisfactory; learning is enriched by a number of extra-curricular opportunities. Attendance is satisfactory and improving.

Leadership and management are inadequate. The school has made insufficient progress since its last inspection because it has not had clear enough direction for improvement. Initiatives put in place since January 2006 have led to some improvement but it is too early to see a significant impact. Governors are very supportive but have not made the school's management fully accountable for its performance. Following a period of declining standards, the school does not have sufficient capacity to improve and therefore value for money is inadequate.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to raise achievement and standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve leadership and management so that:
 - the school has clear direction for improvement;
 - monitoring ensures that staff at all levels are made accountable for standards and performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement is inadequate. The school acknowledges that too many pupils do not do as well as they should during their time in the school.

Children enter the school with below average attainments and many have poor social skills. Teachers in the Foundation Stage deal well with these difficulties, enabling children to make satisfactory and sometimes good progress towards the standards expected by the end of the Reception year. Results in national tests and assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2005 were close to average, showing that most pupils made satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. This is still the case. Results in tests at the end of Year 6 in 2005 were below average in mathematics and science and in the lowest 5% of schools nationally for English. For this group of pupils, there was a sharp decline in pupils' achievement and standards and targets were missed. Results show a declining trend over the last four years. Standards in Year 6 are lower than at the time of the last inspection. Then, as now, standards in mathematics were a cause for concern. Work seen during this inspection indicates that standards are still falling.

Inspectors found few significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils. However, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the support they receive. Those at an early stage of learning English also benefit from additional help and make good gains in learning English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The school sees this aspect of its work as good, but inspectors judge it to be satisfactory. Pupils are generally well behaved and most show good attitudes to work and school. Relationships between the pupils and adults in the school are good. Some low-level disturbance caused by a small minority of pupils does occur in some classes. This is quickly and effectively dealt with by teachers. Pupils know how to stay safe and older pupils take some responsibility as they act as play leaders, providing positive role models for younger pupils in the playground. They make other valuable contributions to the school community, for instance by acting as receptionists. Attendance has improved recently and is now close to average. The school council has only recently been reformed and it is too soon for it to have a significant voice in school affairs. Pupils are developing an awareness of a healthy lifestyle, for example by eating healthy snacks at break. Provision for spiritual, moral and social development is good overall but pupils' knowledge and awareness of other cultures are not promoted sufficiently. The development of the pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy is not consistent enough to prepare them adequately for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate overall. The school evaluated it as satisfactory. Teaching does not meet the full range of pupils' needs and there are significant weaknesses. Pupils do not consistently make the progress of which they are capable. Teaching has a number of good features in the Foundation Stage and learning is good because the teamwork of the staff ensures that pupils' progress is closely monitored and built upon. In Years 1 and 2, teaching leads to satisfactory progress being made by most pupils. In Years 3 to 6, progress is inadequate in relation to pupils' earlier achievement. Lesson planning does not provide well enough for pupils' individual needs. Teaching does not consistently challenge the pupils, so that too few make the progress of which they are capable. Teachers' application of day-to-day assessment is patchy. In a lesson where checks on pupils' understanding were neglected, one pupil said, 'We don't understand what we are supposed to do.'

Some good teaching was seen during the inspection where activities were matched well to pupils' needs, pace was maintained and learning was good. This gives the school a platform of good practice on which to build improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage curriculum is satisfactory overall, with some good features, such as the emphasis on personal development and promoting independence. Learning opportunities are well organised, but outdoor facilities are insufficient to give children the full range of experiences that they should have. Curriculum provision for Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. It is enriched by a number of educational visits and additional activities, such as a science week. Very good support is provided for pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well organised. Recent improvements in the use made of assessment have been introduced to match the work more precisely to pupils' needs. However, it is too soon for these changes to have had significant impact. Provision for literacy, numeracy and the development of information and communication technology skills is satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care guidance and support are satisfactory. Parents and pupils agree that pupils are well cared for. They are able to learn in a calm atmosphere with clear expectations for behaviour, safety and health. The work of the home-school link officer is particularly successful in helping pupils to overcome barriers to learning and gain confidence in their ability to achieve. As a result, the attitudes to learning of the majority are good. The school is at a very early stage of making the most of these positive attitudes to

improve standards and progress. Guidance for pupils on how to make the best progress in their academic work is very variable and lacks cohesion. Because assessment data and other information are not used consistently in planning for progress, the pupils' targets are often too general to provide clear guidance on what to do next. Too much relies on the skills of individual teachers. As a result, pupils are often unclear about how they can improve their work further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The school has too positive a view of its effectiveness, although it accepts that standards and achievement are inadequate. The leadership has not established a common sense of purpose to bring about improvement and standards are falling. The school's self-evaluation is inaccurate. Monitoring of the school's performance is inadequate and does not identify the weaknesses to be tackled. Consequently, improvement planning does not provide clear strategic direction for the school. Issues raised by the last inspection, relating to standards in mathematics and the use of assessment, have not been dealt with effectively. Weaknesses in teaching and the use of assessment are major factors in preventing pupils doing as well as they should. Although some initiatives put in place since January have led to some improvement, for example in the use of assessment and target setting, it is too soon for these changes to have had an impact on standards. There is insufficient monitoring of classroom standards to enable managers to guide the teachers who would benefit from support.

Although governors are supportive and have a good understanding of the way that the school works, they have not held the school to account rigorously enough to bring about an improvement in its performance

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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?	4	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	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	No	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	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?	3	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	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	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?	4	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?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	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

As you know, inspectors visited your school to check on how well it is doing. Thank you very much for the way you welcomed us into your school. We enjoyed talking to you and found you helpful and friendly.

Although there are some good things happening in your school, we came to the decision that it needs extra help to give you the education you deserve. We have recommended that the school needs 'special measures'. This means that, as well as receiving extra help, inspectors will make visits to St Joseph's to check that improvements are being made.

These are the things we thought were good.

- You usually behave well in lessons, try hard and most of you enjoy school.
- Most of the time you get on well together and willingly take on jobs and responsibilities.
- Those of you who find learning difficult get good help.
- The school teaches you how to stay safe and keep healthy.

These are the things we thought should be improved.

- We feel that you are capable of doing better, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- We have asked your teachers to find ways to help you learn more successfully.
- We have asked your headteacher and the governors to find ways of making the school a better place to learn and to keep checking that all lessons are as good as they should be.

Thank you for helping us with our work. We hope that you carry on enjoying school and do your best to help Mrs Blakemore and your teachers make St Joseph's a better school.