



St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104476
Local Authority Knowsley
Inspection number 286953
Inspection dates 20–21 November 2006
Reporting inspector Tony Painter

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Tithebarn Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Knowsley, Prescot
Age range of pupils	4–11		Merseyside L34 0HA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 5468742
Number on roll (school)	153	Fax number	0151 5491274
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Fr Paul Benbow
		Headteacher	Mr P Kennedy
Date of previous school inspection	28 October 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 20–21 November 2006	Inspection number 286953
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small Catholic school serves pupils living within the village and over a wider surrounding area. This area has many indicators of substantial deprivation and the proportion of children in the school who are eligible for free schools meals is above average. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is around the national average. All pupils come from White British backgrounds. The school has a Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This school provides a good standard of education for its pupils. The very positive quality of relationships strikes one immediately on entering the school. Parents agree, describing it as 'warm and welcoming' and praising the staff: 'everyone is lovely.' These very strong relationships encourage a real community atmosphere within which pupils thrive. Teachers build well on this foundation to create an effective and purposeful atmosphere in most lessons. As a result, pupils' overall progress is good. Pupils quickly settle into the Reception class, where good provision ensures that they achieve well from starting points that are well below average overall. Good teaching ensures that pupils continue to achieve well as they progress through the school. They reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Although these results fell in 2006, the school is clear on where the weaknesses lie and has put action into place to raise standards again next year.

Teachers' good organisation and routines mean that most lessons have sufficient pace and pupils' very positive attitudes enhance their learning further. Teachers make very good use of their knowledge of each individual pupil to encourage and support their learning. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for example, are quickly and accurately identified and appropriate support helps them make good progress. The school has introduced a good range of ways to judge pupils' progress since the time of the last inspection. These are being used increasingly well to set targets and help planning. However, teachers still do not make full use of the information available when matching tasks to pupils' abilities. This has its biggest impact on the progress of higher-ability pupils, where opportunities to reach the highest levels are sometimes missed.

The school is very effective in its pastoral care of pupils. However, academic guidance is less well developed as some pupils are unsure how to improve their work. The school continually seeks to improve the care of pupils. For example, it has recently revised its approach to behaviour management and held a meaningful anti-bullying week in school. Its efforts have been successful. Pupils report that they feel safe and well protected. Incidents of bullying are extremely rare and all those spoken to were very confident of what to do if any such incidents occurred. The school is very aware of its few vulnerable pupils and is taking increasingly positive action to support them, with the help of the learning mentor. The very positive support for all means that pupils enjoy all aspects of school and their attendance is above average, further supporting their good progress.

Increasingly effective teamwork throughout the school is helping to improve all aspects of the school's work, including its leadership and management. Inspectors agree with the school's judgement of its overall effectiveness. However, it has been over-generous in its evaluation of the care, guidance and support it provides for pupils and has not taken into account the importance of academic guidance. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work very successfully together, sharing responsibilities and supporting new developments. This has ensured good progress since the last inspection in establishing assessment systems and improving information and communication

technology (ICT) provision. Recent positive action has helped all staff to work together more, both as subject coordinators and within the whole-school approach to assessment. As a result, staff are gaining greater confidence in looking critically and accurately at the effectiveness of their own work and that of others. This is helping them to improve provision, such as in the current moves to develop the curriculum in line with national and local guidance. Planning for future developments, both by subject coordinators and within the school improvement plan, is focusing on appropriate matters to improve the school. However, the planning does not always identify sufficiently precisely how developments will have an impact on pupils' work and the standards they should reach. The good progress made since the last inspection shows the school's good potential to continue to improve further, and the school represents good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make greater use of assessment information to match tasks to the needs of pupils of different abilities, particularly the more able pupils.
- Ensure that development planning focuses more sharply on the expected impact of actions on pupils' standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Many pupils have had limited experiences before joining the school. Over recent years, overall attainment on entry has been falling and is now well below that generally found. Pupils achieve well in the Reception class in all aspects of their development but weaknesses remain, particularly in their language skills. They are working towards the expected standards by the time they begin Year 1. Through Years 1 to 6, pupils continue to make good progress, reaching broadly average standards by Year 6. Good support ensures that pupils with additional learning needs are quickly identified and achieve well.

The school's results in the Year 6 national tests had been rising to 2005, reflecting improvements in teaching. However, the school has consistently fallen short of its targets for pupils reaching the higher Level 5. The most recent 2006 results have fallen, particularly in mathematics. This has mostly been a result of significant levels of learning difficulties within this group of pupils. However, new strategies have been introduced and higher targets have been identified for next year to restore the rising trend.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Children in the Reception year make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Pupils throughout the school are confident and polite and they behave well in lessons and around school. They enjoy learning very much and are keen to contribute and ask

questions. Their positive attitudes to school are also demonstrated through good attendance. Pupils know how to avoid potential risks, including those that might result from unwise use of the Internet. They are helped to become physically active, for example at playtimes and in physical education lessons and clubs. Pupils show a growing understanding of how to cope with bullying and the impact of racist behaviour. They are prepared well for the future because they make good progress in literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. They make a good contribution to the community through a range of activities. Members of the school council, for example, are proud of the work they do for the school community, such as fundraising and managing the budget for school grounds improvement. This work also helps them to develop valuable skills for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good and helps to ensure that almost all pupils achieve well. Teachers have very good personal knowledge of the pupils in their classes. This, alongside their effective organisation and very good relationships, helps create a strong positive atmosphere for learning, where pupils gain self-esteem and learn well throughout the school. This is reflected, for example, in their increasing confidence when talking about their work. Teachers ensure pupils' good behaviour and usually identify clearly what they will be learning. This helps most lessons to have a brisk pace and ensures that pupils are engaged in their learning.

Most lessons have detailed plans. Marking is generally positive and often identifies what pupils need to do to improve, with teachers increasingly setting targets for groups of pupils. However, teachers do not always make enough use of information they have about how well pupils of different abilities are already doing to match tasks to their needs. This is particularly apparent in teachers' identification of tasks that will challenge the more able pupils. This means that opportunities for these pupils to reach the highest levels are sometimes missed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Teachers are making positive moves towards linking pupils' learning in different subjects and widening their experiences. They make good use of links with other schools and agencies to enhance the curriculum and support for pupils' learning. New strategies such as science week and multicultural activities are adding noticeably to pupils' enjoyment and learning. Within this structure, pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT learning needs are increasingly well met and they make good progress overall. A strong range of extra-curricular activities also extends pupils' experiences well, notably in the range of sports available through the year. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties

and/or disabilities are well identified and met. Additional projects beyond their normal lessons to support gifted and talented pupils widen their understanding.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect of the school's work is good. Pupils learn how to keep safe and stay healthy through lessons and other activities, including a well thought out programme of personal, social and health education. Pupils say they feel safe and they are confident that any incidents of oppressive behaviour would be quickly and effectively dealt with. The school's Healthy Schools Award emphasises its success in promoting pupils' physical, social and emotional health. The school cares well for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and they make good progress because of this. The school is also very aware that a few pupils have other barriers to their learning and works hard to overcome these. Nevertheless, alongside these significant strengths, academic guidance is not always good enough. The school has a good deal of information about how well pupils are doing, particularly in mathematics and English and increasing use is made of targets to promote progress. However, this information is not always used well enough to plan work that helps pupils, particularly the more able, to make as much progress as they should and pupils are not always clear of what they need to do to improve. Most statutory requirements for ensuring pupils' health and safety are in place. However, although the school has collected the required information about staff members' suitability for their work, this information has not yet been drawn together.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is very well supported by the deputy headteacher and together they have forged an effective team along with subject coordinators. A well structured programme has helped subject coordinators to evaluate their own work and that of others, and to identify strengths and some areas for development. However, these do not always clearly identify the expected outcomes in ways that can be accurately evaluated. For example, proposed actions sometimes do not focus closely enough on raising standards and attainment. The school responded to the drop in mathematics results at the end of last year with purposeful action, but it is too early to judge its effect. Governors are very supportive of the life and work of the school and make a positive contribution to pupils' development. They are satisfactorily involved in formulating and monitoring the school's improvement plan.

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Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
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

Mr Martin and I inspected your school at the end of November. Thank you for being so helpful and friendly while we were finding out how well the school is doing.

We think your school is a good school and we noticed a lot of positive things. Here are some of them that we thought were particularly good:

- you learn well and make good progress
- you get on well with each other and with teachers and other members of staff
- you're interested in your lessons
- your teachers and the other adults in school take good care of you, so you feel safe and well looked after
- the teachers work together well to help you to succeed.

There are a few ways in which we think that your school can be made even better. We have asked the teachers to:

- make sure that they plan lessons that help you all to learn as well as you can
- focus more on how new ideas and ways of doing things will help you be able to achieve even more.

You can help by carrying on trying hard and listening to your teachers. Join in with the different activities such as the anti-bullying week we saw when we came in. Make sure that you continue to enjoy school.

Once again, thank you for all your help.