

Our Lady and St Swithin's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104632
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	286992
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Clare Henderson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	321
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jane Troy
Headteacher	Mr J McCaul
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2002
School address	Parkstile Lane Croxteth Liverpool Merseyside L11 0BQ
Telephone number	0151 5463868
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Our Lady and St Swithin's is larger than most primary schools. The school serves a community in which there is significant social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Most pupils are of White British heritage and a small proportion is from other minority ethnic groups, including East European heritage. There are a few pupils at an early stage of learning to speak and understand English. The school has gained the 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: 3

Our Lady and St Swithin's is a satisfactory school. It has a caring ethos which promotes a joy of learning and provides its pupils with a safe and secure environment. Parents are highly supportive of the school and have full confidence in the headteacher and staff. Pupils are proud of their school; they behave well, show consideration for each other and try their best with their work. As a result, their personal development and well-being are good.

Standards and achievement are satisfactory. Children start school with skills well below national expectations. Good teaching and provision in the Foundation Stage help children to settle quickly and to achieve well. By the end of Year 2, attainment is broadly in line with the national average. During Years 3 to 6, pupils make satisfactory progress. In the 2006 national tests, standards reached in English and mathematics were lower than the national average, particularly for more able pupils.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although the headteacher provides caring leadership, systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, including the tracking of pupils' progress, are not rigorous enough. Consequently, the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness in terms of provision and overall effectiveness is not accurate. Although governors are eager to support the school, they do not hold it to account sufficiently. Finances and resources are managed satisfactorily and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Although adults take good care of pupils and provide good support for their personal development, they do not make best use of tracking and assessment data to plan lessons or move learning on at a fast enough rate, particularly for more able pupils. The quality of marking is too inconsistent, and as a result, pupils are not always fully aware of what they need to do to improve their work.

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It provides good enrichment to support pupils' work in the arts and sports, giving them many opportunities to learn essential life skills. Through serving on the school council or being playground leaders to the younger children, pupils become increasingly self-confident and useful members of the school and wider community. This prepares them adequately for their future lives. The school demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve and has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that planning and delivery of lessons meet the needs of all learners and particularly the most able.
- Implement a consistent approach to marking and academic guidance so that all pupils are fully aware of what they need to do in order to improve their work.
- Establish rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures that provide staff and governors with a more accurate view of the school strengths and areas for development.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children enter the Nursery with skills that are below those expected for their age, particularly in their communication, personal and social development. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage. However, given their low starting point, some commence Year 1 with standards which are below average for children of this age. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout Years 1 and 2, and test results for Year 2 in 2006 were broadly average. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make satisfactory progress. Prior to 2006, pupils' performance in the national tests in Year 6 was broadly average overall. In 2006, standards attained by pupils were below average in English and mathematics and particularly for the most able pupils. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in the current Year 2 are in line to reach broadly average standards and those in Year 6 are on track to achieve their targets. However, despite these improvements, more needs to be done to enable all learners, especially the more able, to make more rapid progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils make positive comments about their school and like being there. They enjoy taking part in the rich variety of clubs and activities outside of school. Most pupils work and play together well and play leaders help younger pupils to enjoy their lunchtimes and stay safe.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Through their work in personal, social and health education, pupils become increasingly aware of themselves, others, and the need for good relationships. They are taught to have a strong commitment to the local community. Pupils welcome opportunities, such as the school council, to have a voice in decisions that affect their life in school and the wider community. For instance, they have been influential in introducing improvements to the grounds and equipment for break times. Pupils eagerly take on additional responsibilities that help them prepare well for their future lives. The school liaises well with the educational welfare officer in working with families whose children do not attend regularly. Although attendance is below average, it has improved significantly since the last inspection.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Good relationships between adults and pupils are evident in lessons and throughout the day-to-day activities of the school. Staff are very caring towards the pupils and manage behaviour well. Teachers' planning does not always identify learning activities that closely match the needs of all learners. A lack of pace and insufficient challenge are evident in many lessons, and this limits the progress made by pupils, particularly the most able. Support staff are deployed effectively and help pupils with learning difficulties and those at an early stage of learning English to make satisfactory progress. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and does not always make clear what pupils need to do next in order to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets statutory requirements and is enriched through a wide range of visits, visitors and school clubs. These activities stimulate enjoyment and nurture pupils' interests and talents well. Healthy lifestyles and personal safety are woven meaningfully into the curriculum. Effective provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities helps them to make satisfactory progress. However, the needs of the more able and provision for gifted and talented pupils are not fully met in all lessons. This is why the curriculum is not as good as the school believes. Provision for personal and social education is a strong feature of the school. It gives pupils opportunities to work together, to reflect, and to express their feelings. Satisfactory provision for literacy and numeracy and the improving provision for information and communication technology provide pupils with satisfactory basic skills for life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The provision for care, guidance and support is satisfactory overall. Staff are very caring and offer effective support to pupils. Partnership work with parents and other agencies enables those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the most vulnerable, to receive the help they need to make satisfactory progress. Child protection and health and safety procedures are in place. The good health education on offer helps pupils make healthy lifestyle choices. Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for because the staff deal effectively with any problems, such as bullying. They are well prepared for starting school and make a smooth transfer into their next stage in education. However, although the school has started to use data in order to track pupils' progress, assessment information is not used sufficiently well to set learning targets that help pupils understand what to do next to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has a very 'hands on' approach and regularly visits lessons. All staff take good care of pupils and make a strong contribution to the smooth running of the school. However, school self-review, and monitoring and evaluation procedures are not rigorous enough. As a result, senior staff and governors do not have a completely accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Senior staff show commitment and a strong will to develop their own leadership skills and improve the quality of provision. However, they are not involved enough in whole-school monitoring and evaluation. Subject leaders, although keen and enthusiastic to make improvements, are not provided with enough guidance or opportunities to evaluate how effective learning and teaching is in their areas in order to take the necessary action to secure improvements. Effective partnerships with other schools and outside support agencies help the school with its work. They make a particularly strong contribution to enable pupils with learning difficulties, or those at an early stage of learning English, to make similar progress to other pupils. Governors are committed and fulfil their statutory responsibilities, however, they do not sufficiently hold the school to account.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for your friendly welcome during our recent visit to your school. You were all very polite and helpful. We enjoyed chatting with you and listening to your views. You told us that your school is very friendly and we agree with you. We judge it to be a satisfactory school.

There are good things in your school of which you should be proud. We were impressed by the way you help each other out in lessons and in the playground. You clearly enjoy the many opportunities you have to take responsibility and rise to the challenges. Your school council is well run and has already made some good suggestions to improve your school. We think you make good contributions to your school and the local community. Your teachers plan some interesting activities for you and, because of this, you work hard in lessons.

One of the reasons for our visit was to see how your school could improve. We have asked your teachers to help you do even better in your work, so more of you can achieve your very best. We also think that in some lessons, the most able pupils are given work that is a bit too easy for them. Finally, we have asked adults in school to check more closely how you are doing in your work and to set targets more often to help you to improve your work. Carry on working hard and enjoying school.