



St Finbar's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104640
Local Authority Liverpool
Inspection number 286994
Inspection dates 20–21 September 2006
Reporting inspector Paul Bamber

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	South Hill Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Liverpool
Age range of pupils	3–11		Merseyside L8 9RY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 7273963
Number on roll (school)	160	Fax number	0151 7269950
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev J Southworth
		Headteacher	Mrs R Bibby
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 20–21 September 2006	Inspection number 286994
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average size school is in a very socially and economically deprived area of Liverpool. Because of its denominational status, around a quarter of the pupils come from outside the school's immediate area. Most pupils are of White British heritage. There is a higher proportion than average of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but no pupil has a statement of special educational need. A very high proportion is entitled to a free school meal. The school has Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Parents are rightly very positive about it and especially appreciate its friendly community, how open the school is to their suggestions and concerns and the very good quality of the care and support provided. For the most vulnerable pupils, the school provides an oasis of calm. Pupils report that they like the good teaching and how friendly everyone is. They eat healthy food and exercise frequently. The curriculum is of good quality and provides them with a wide range of interesting and enjoyable experiences in and out of the classroom. Children enter the Nursery with very poor skills in communication, in number and in their personal and social development. Most make good progress throughout the school but, despite this, standards are below average in English and mathematics by the time they leave Year 6. Progress is satisfactory rather than good in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 because pupils find solving problems and more complex multiplication and division difficult, despite the school's efforts to improve these skills. The school acknowledges that its main focus, until recently, has been in supporting the many pupils who find it most difficult to learn. As a result, some of the relatively small number of more-able pupils have not achieved as well as they should. Pupils throughout the school behave exceptionally well and are keen to learn. They express their feelings and opinions freely and are sensitive to the impact of their actions on others. These strengths in their personal skills result from the excellent provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school, in effective partnership with outside agencies, goes that extra mile to help pupils and their families. This has resulted in impressive recent improvements in attendance, punctuality and in parental involvement in their children's learning.

The school offers good value for money. Good leadership and management have resulted in effective improvement since the last inspection, especially in the quality of resources, in teaching and in pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT). The school diligently checks its performance but insufficiently uses its knowledge of what pupils need to do better to influence changes in ways of teaching or in the curriculum. Nevertheless, there is good capacity to improve because the united staff is confident in the leadership and open to change. Action taken to improve things mostly works well. For example, overall standards in the Year 2 assessments and in Year 6 national tests have improved over the last three years.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 so that more who gain the expected level in the Year 2 assessments reach the expected level in the Year 6 national tests.
- Increase the challenge and success of the more-able pupils.
- Identify clearly how planned changes to ways of teaching and to the curriculum will improve pupils' learning and achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most pupils make good progress during their time at the school. Children enter the Nursery with low standards. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes as a result of thoughtful teaching, good assessment and a well planned curriculum. Despite good provision, many pupils enter Year 1 not reaching the targets set for them in language, literacy and mathematics. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 6, other than in mathematics in Years 3 to 6. Progress through Years 3 to 6 is only satisfactory in mathematics: pupils find problem solving, handling data and more complicated multiplication and division particularly taxing. There is a lower than normal proportion of more-able pupils on roll but not enough gain the higher levels in the national tests in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, some very good as a result of well focused teaching and support. Standards in science are higher than in English and mathematics because pupils enjoy the many practical activities involved.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good overall. This is evident in the friendly relationships between pupils and the caring attitude of staff. Pupils are tolerant of each other. They show a good level of awareness of other cultures and their social, moral, and spiritual development is outstanding. As a result, pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they contribute very well to lessons and to the smooth running of the school. Attendance is below average but improving. Pupils contribute to school development through the school council. Activities that form part of the healthy schools programme, particularly healthy eating, are well understood. Pupils are keen to say how much they enjoy school and have a good attitude towards their learning. They adopt safe practices, in school and on the playground. They make good academic progress in basic skills and collaborate well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers expect pupils to work hard, behave well and to strive to improve. Learning is good because pupils respond to these expectations positively, happily involve themselves in lessons and establish very good working relationships with each other. Learning is at its best when pupils take a good level of responsibility for their own learning, are given work that fully matches their needs and work cooperatively. In many lessons, teachers are explicit in what they expect pupils to do and pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn. Effective summaries of lessons focus pupils well on what they have learned and what they need

to do to improve. Pupils report that they, 'get the right amount of homework' and that, 'it is different according to how you get on in class'. In less successful lessons, teachers talk too much and pupils do too little. Teachers do not consistently consider the needs of more-able pupils when they plan lessons. In contrast, teaching and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effective, enabling them to make at least good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Overall, the curriculum is of good quality and meets statutory requirements. The Foundation Stage curriculum is very well organised and children make good progress. The curriculum matches the needs of the majority of pupils, although more-able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well catered for in all classes through the use of a specialist teacher and other good quality support staff. The use of ICT to engage and interest pupils and overcome barriers to learning has a positive effect on pupils' enjoyment of lessons. Pupils' health and safety, clearly a high priority in the curriculum, is rigorously planned for and effectively taught. Frequent visits, a number of out of class activities and a wide range of visitors throughout the year, enrich the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support. Staff know pupils and their families well and begin to break down barriers to learning from the earliest stages of their education. Pupils are extremely well supervised and staff ensure that they are safe. This is a school in which every child really does matter. Pupils feel safe, free from bullying, are happy in school and are confident that staff will look after them. Pupils are well prepared for transition between classes. For example, the teaching, organisation and planning in Year 1 to accommodate the learning needs of children as they move from the Reception class are particularly good. Pupils do not always understand well enough their learning targets and what they need to do next in order to improve, particularly more-able children. Good provision has increased pupils' awareness of the need for healthy eating and regular exercise.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher sets a good example to pupils and staff and has established a very positive ethos that reflects the Christian values very well. Every child in the school is equally valued and welcomed. Parents, through the encouragement of leaders and managers, are increasingly valuable partners in their children's education. The school knows itself well and is determined to improve standards and provision further. In this the school is largely successful. This is clear from the good improvement made since the last inspection and the gradually rising

standards. It acknowledges that it may have been too focused on supporting pupils who find learning difficult and realises that it needs to do more to ensure that more-able pupils achieve equally as well. Most pupils progress well because the quality of teaching, the curriculum and pupils' standards are all regularly and thoroughly checked by senior staff and subject leaders. As a result, improvements are implemented accordingly. However, most plans for changing ways of teaching and to the curriculum are not specific enough about what improvements in pupils' learning and achievements will result. All leaders, including governors, promote healthy lifestyles amongst the pupils and, recently, great strides have been made in ensuring that they eat more healthily and take more regular exercise. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage and of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are both very effective, making a significant contribution to the good progress children make in these areas.

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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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	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	2
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?	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 making us so welcome during the days we spent in your school. We really appreciated the way in which you chatted to us and let us know so many interesting things about your school. We would like to share with you those things we thought were really good about your school and those things we felt it could do a little bit better.

What we liked most about your school:

- your excellent behaviour and that you enjoy school so much
- you are enthusiastic about the interesting activities on offer in and out of the classroom
- most of your lessons are taught well and you are very well looked after
- those of you who find getting to school on time everyday, or those of you who find it more difficult to learn are really well cared for and encouraged to join in everything. We think that this is a school in which all of you matter
- the good start children make in the Nursery and Reception classes.

Although your school is good, there are a few things that we feel would make it even better:

- for the school to give more help to those of you who learn quickly
- the school should make sure that you do better in mathematics in Year 3 to 6
- the plans the school makes should be more detailed about how you will improve your work.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. We hope that you continue to really enjoy school, do very well with your work and carry on trying really hard.