

St Francis de Sales Catholic Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104650
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	286999
Inspection dates	21–22 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Frank Carruthers

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	400
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Jb Thompson
Headteacher	Mrs E Seymour
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2002
School address	Hale Road Liverpool Merseyside L4 3RL
Telephone number	0151 5257602
Fax number	0151 5213380

Age group	7–11
Inspection dates	21–22 May 2007
Inspection number	286999

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average Catholic junior school, housed in a modernised building that is over 100 years old, is situated next to the parish church in a well established district of Liverpool. It serves a stable community with housing that consists mainly of owner-occupied or rented terraced and semi-detached property. Almost all pupils are White British and none is learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has the Artsmark Gold and Activemark Gold and has applied for British Council International School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding education for pupils. Standards are high. Outstanding provision, leadership and management lead to the positive outcomes evident in the pupils' excellent achievement and outstanding personal development. Pupils do exceptionally well in English, mathematics and science. Where the school has identified relative weaknesses, for example in boys' writing, they have taken very effective steps to promote better achievement. The proportion of pupils who reach the higher Level 5 in national tests in Year 6 is frequently well above average. Standards of presentation in workbooks and folders are high because teachers encourage pupils to take a real pride in their work.

Pupils' progress is very impressive and this is because pupils are given clear guidance on how they can improve their work and so understand what the next steps in their learning are. Work is challenging and pupils' targets are demanding. Pupils with additional needs make excellent progress because of the detailed and systematic approach the school takes to identifying their needs and then helping them. No pupil is allowed to 'slip through the net'. As a result, the standards these pupils achieve often match those of their peers, and two thirds of pupils identified as requiring additional support meet nationally expected levels at the end of Year 6.

Pupils enjoy school very much, behave exceptionally well and develop an excellent awareness of personal safety and how to lead a healthy and fit life. They understand a great deal about other cultures through the curriculum and they grow into sensible and responsible people. Provision for the care, guidance and support of all pupils is excellent and is evident, for example, in the way the school promotes their emotional development. Staff and pupils have excellent relationships and these are the foundation for the pupils' mature, positive attitudes. The school has developed excellent procedures to keep track of how pupils achieve, and uses the information very well to support any who appear to be underachieving. Provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding.

The quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum is outstanding. Strengths of the teaching in all classes include the excellent management of pupils, very challenging and interesting work, and highly effective use of new technology such as interactive whiteboards and personal computers. The curriculum promotes exceptionally well an international dimension to the pupils' learning with links to individuals, schools and colleges overseas. There are exciting themed weeks in which a topic such as Africa is explored with visitors to school and through a wide range of events, trips and activities. The standard of artwork displayed around school, which arises from links such as this and another with Spain, is very impressive. It makes the learning environment vibrant and promotes the pupils' self-esteem exceptionally well.

The headteacher provides inspirational, dynamic leadership and is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher. Other members of the senior leadership team and key subject leaders are given the opportunity to explore and follow their enthusiasm and interests and this leads to the excellent provision. Monitoring of the school's performance is exceptional; it provides senior staff with an excellent grasp of how well the school is doing. Their self-evaluation of the school is accurate, though overall they have been modest in their views. Governors are very supportive of the school and are well led by the chair and vice-chair, who work as a very effective team. Governors do not have as big an impact on the process of school self-evaluation as they should have, however, and this is an aspect for development. Very effective steps have been taken

since the last inspection to improve both standards and provision, and this indicates an excellent capacity to improve. The school provides outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the role of governors in the links they have with school so that they have a greater impact on the process of school self-evaluation and improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

From levels of attainment that are broadly average on entry in Year 3, pupils' achievement is excellent. Standards have been consistently high in Year 6 in recent years and this is also true of the current year group. Pupils' achievement between the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6 has been significantly better than average, putting the school in the top 8% of schools nationally for the value it adds to the pupils' learning. This achievement is the result of outstanding teaching together with pupils' excellent attitudes to learning, which are fostered by the staff's high expectations for pupils' behaviour and learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils are enthusiastic and behaviour is excellent both in class and around school. Pupils report that bullying is very rare and the role of the buddies at playtimes is very helpful in making pupils feel safe and welcomed. They say that any incidents of misbehaviour are handled properly by staff and a detention system at playtimes is effective in making pupils put the maximum effort into lessons. There have been no exclusions. Levels of attendance have improved since the last inspection and are now above average.

Pupils willingly take on responsibilities. School councillors organise their own meetings without adult support and all say they are proud of what they have done to make playtimes more enjoyable and to promote healthy eating and safer journeys to school. Pupils are aware of the need to help others less fortunate than themselves, for instance when they raise money for charities and learn about life in other countries. They participate readily in community events and learn to work independently and as a team so they are well prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Lessons have very good pace and pupils listen exceptionally well. The focus on speaking and listening is very effective in giving the pupils confidence to express their views. Teachers use a range of teaching styles to improve learning. An example of this was seen in an excellent mathematics lesson which took place in the school hall so that pupils could use their bodies to explore angles in shapes. Very effective support from teaching assistants helps the less able children to learn very well. Pupils report that lessons are combined with 'fun things' such as links between mathematics and football statistics. They learn extremely well from first-hand experiences and carrying out investigations. The sharing of best practice with less experienced staff has a positive impact on the overall quality of teaching and learning and results in excellent pupil management. Marking is especially

thorough and helps the pupils to know what they must do to improve. Pupils also use a colour-coded system to indicate how successful they consider their learning has been. As a result, their learning is highly effective.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and yet the staff are not letting it stand still. It places a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy, and links between subjects are very effective in promoting these skills. The international dimension provides a highly stimulating curriculum for pupils, and innovative links with schools and other institutions in different parts of the world are used extremely well to pursue themes such as social justice.

The school has gained national awards in the arts and sports and these contribute exceptionally well to pupils' cultural awareness and a healthy and fit lifestyle. A stimulating learning environment with an art gallery, library and shared areas promote study and research. Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is exceptionally well planned and taught. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding with detailed, small-stepped targets for pupils to achieve in their individual education plans. There is an excellent range of activities outside lessons for pupils to enjoy, including successful school teams and an orchestra. Visits out of school to promote understanding are excellent. There is a regular skiing trip to France and a forthcoming residential visit to Barcelona. Provision for a modern foreign language, which includes high quality input from a Spanish assistant, is outstanding.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school promotes the well-being of all pupils exceptionally well. There are very good arrangements to help pupils support one another and the school is especially caring about pupils whose families experience difficulty or crisis. All aspects of health, safety, child protection, risk assessment and safe recruitment of staff are in place. There are very good arrangements for the transition of pupils into school and on to high schools. Parents who responded to the inspectors' questionnaire were unanimous in their positive views of the school and appreciate how well their children do. Parents comment 'It's a great school to be part of' and appreciate 'its caring and supportive atmosphere'. Procedures to track the progress of pupils are used very effectively to identify good achievement, underachievement and gaps in learning. Targets are clearly understood by pupils and have a positive impact on how pupils achieve. Regular assessments are marked according to pupils' targets. This means the pupils have a keen awareness of how they are doing: this helps them to take responsibility for their own learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a significant impact on the success of the school and their high expectations are reflected in the attitudes of all staff. Teachers are now fully involved in evaluating their areas of responsibility, an issue addressed since the last inspection. Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is highly effective in identifying areas for improvement. These then

become key priorities in the very clear, concise school development plan. The school is very successful in meeting these priorities and its challenging targets for standards in Year 6, which the school frequently exceeds. As a result, staff have an excellent overview of their performance and effectiveness, and the school is highly valued by the local authority, parents and governors alike. There is outstanding commitment to achieving the best for all pupils and to promoting effective links with agencies and schools both locally and much further afield. These visitors and visits provide exceptionally interesting learning experiences and excellent role models for pupils.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Inspection of St Francis de Sales Catholic Junior School, Liverpool, L4 3RL

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you very much for your help when we inspected your school. We enjoyed our visit very much indeed. Now I would like to share with you our thoughts about your school.

Yours is an outstanding school. Here are just some of the excellent features of your school.

- The staff take excellent care of you all and teach you exceptionally well.
- Your headteacher has high expectations for your school, and everyone in it responds to the challenge.
- Your attitude to lessons is outstanding and it is clear that you enjoy school very much and you are all becoming mature students who want to do well.
- You are doing exceptionally well in English, mathematics, science and ICT.
- The school makes your learning very exciting and interesting, for instance in planning trips abroad and organising special visitors and events in the themed weeks and at other times.
- The staff provide you with excellent opportunities to take on responsibilities in school and to enjoy activities at playtimes, lunchtimes and after school.

Did you know that in recent years pupils in your school have done so well that their performance has been in the top 8% of all junior-aged pupils in the country? Congratulations!

There is just one item we have asked the school to do to improve: to strengthen the governors' links with school, which will help them in checking how the school is doing.

Please carry on working hard and enjoying school.