



St Hugh's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104652
Local Authority Liverpool
Inspection number 287001
Inspection dates 18–19 September 2006
Reporting inspector Colin Smith

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Earle Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Liverpool
Age range of pupils	4–11		Merseyside L7 6HE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 7332899
Number on roll (school)	148	Fax number	0151 2800184
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Miss A Glanville
		Headteacher	Mrs Collette Denby
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Hugh's is a small primary school. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is twice the national average and the proportion entitled to free school meals is very high. Movement of children into and out of the school is extremely high because families, largely from African and Eastern European countries, settle into the inner city area. These factors reflect the extent of social disadvantage in the local community. One third of the children are of White British heritage. Two thirds come from minority ethnic backgrounds, largely Black British and Black African heritage with a few children from Asian heritage. Several different languages are spoken. Over a quarter of the children are at an early stage of learning English. Children enter school with very low attainment. In the current Reception class, three quarters of the children are yet unable to speak English. During the last two years, almost half of the staff has changed, including the headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Hugh's suffered a period of staffing instability and standards fell. The new headteacher acted swiftly in bringing staff, governors and consultants together to reverse the declining trends. As a result, teaching and learning are now checked rigorously. Challenging targets are set for each year group and children's progress towards them is measured at regular intervals. Shoots of improvement are evident in the 2006 results which are higher than in 2005 at both key stages. The headteacher's good leadership is putting the school back on track and teachers are striving to ensure that all children fulfil their potential. The school judges its effectiveness to be good, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. However, there is still more to do to raise standards to their former levels. School effectiveness is therefore satisfactory.

Children's personal development is good. Outstanding levels of care to ensure that children are safe and protected are reflected in their exemplary behaviour and excellent understanding of healthy and safe lifestyles. Children suffering emotional or learning difficulties or unable to speak English, face considerable challenges. Yet all children thoroughly enjoy school. Good teaching and a carefully adapted curriculum are helping to remove the barriers to learning. Children are increasingly experiencing success. This is immediately evident in the Reception class, where children get off to a positive start, despite most of them having very little or no understanding of English. Parents are very happy with the education provided and children are proud of their school. As one parent commented, 'Going to St Hugh's has been a refuge from a storm.'

At first glance, the 2006 results at both key stages indicate that standards are exceptionally low in English and science and well below average in mathematics. However, one third of the Year 6 children assessed had only joined the school within the last two years and many of these late arrivals spoke little or no English. Additionally, over half of the Year 6 children had learning difficulties. To gain an accurate picture of standards, the school has recalculated the results for the 40% of children who remained with the school for four years or more. This shows that almost three quarters of them reached the levels expected in English and mathematics, which is not far short of the national picture.

Children's achievement is satisfactory overall and improving. Taking account of their very low starting points, the degree of learning and language difficulties and the short time many children remain in St Hugh's, the vast majority are now achieving as well as they can in mathematics and in most aspects of English. Staff are well aware that standards in science have not improved enough, particularly in relation to children's skills of investigation. Children's writing is improving but not as quickly as their reading. This is because in one class, children complete too many worksheets instead of practising and improving their written work.

By carefully examining the work of the school, staff and governors have gained an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. They know where their priorities lie and when and how to intervene to remedy any signs of underachievement. Better

results in 2006 than in 2005 show that the school has a satisfactory capacity for improvement. The school is currently providing satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in science by improving children's skills of investigation.
- Improve achievement in English by ensuring that children have sufficient guided opportunities to practise and improve their writing in every class.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children enter school with very low attainment. Despite many of them not being able to speak English, they settle quickly and begin to communicate. Although very few are able to reach the goals expected in language, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world, they make good progress in their personal, creative and physical development to reach the required levels.

Standards are still well below the national average but improving. Key Stage 1 results in 2005 showed that standards were exceptionally low in all subjects. The Key Stage 2 results show a similar picture apart from mathematics, which was higher but still below average. These results do not take account of the very high number of children joining the school. For example, one third of the children joined late in Year 5 and mainly in Year 6. Three quarters of these children spoke little or no English and well over half of the year group had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most of the children who remain for four years or more do reach the levels expected in English, mathematics and science. Results in 2006 have improved and more children have reached the higher levels in English and science.

The school's root and branch analysis, prompted by falling trends, revealed that progress in 2004 had noticeably slowed in Years 4 and 5 where successive changes of teachers had disrupted children's learning. Staffing is now settled. School assessment information in English and mathematics shows that from 2005 to 2006, children made at least satisfactory progress in all year groups and good or better progress in Years 2, 4 and 5. The end of key stage results improved accordingly. School assessment information also shows that there are no significant differences in achievement amongst boys, girls, and children at an early stage of learning English or any of the minority ethnic groups. The school's involvement with the Black Achievement Project is proving very beneficial. The few gifted and talented children are now reaching higher levels. Children with the greatest learning difficulties are making good progress towards their personal targets. Having raised achievement in mathematics and most aspects of English, the school is tackling the weaknesses in science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school provides a safe haven for all children. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Children come into school with smiling faces, eager to experience the new day. Despite their excitement, the atmosphere is calm because behaviour is excellent. There is a strong sense of community. Children respect and take responsibility for each other. New arrivals are befriended instantly and children frequently act as interpreters for their new friends. Children enjoy school and arrive punctually. Attendance is below average but affected by families moving area without telling the school. Only a very small number of children are persistent absentees. Exclusions are extremely rare. Encouragement to consider and make informed choices prepares children well for the future. Consequently, they have an excellent awareness of how to remain healthy and keep themselves safe. Visiting supermarkets and shopping activities helps them to understand the world of work and the value of money.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, particularly the use of assessment to measure how well children are learning. Teachers use the information well in English and mathematics to match the work provided to children's very different learning needs. However, worksheets are occasionally used too much, limiting opportunities for children to improve their writing. Lessons are calm and purposeful and children work hard. Teachers ensure that children understand what they are expected to learn and ask them to assess how well they have understood the lesson. This is making children more responsible learners. Improvements in teaching are raising achievement in literacy and numeracy. However, not all teachers have a secure understanding of how to teach the investigational aspects of science. This is why results in science have improved only marginally.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum provided is sensitively tailored to support children with learning difficulties and those learning to speak English. More able children are well catered for in both English and mathematics. Good opportunities for children to develop their creative gifts and sporting talents are evident in the attractive artwork and popular sporting activities. Rich and stimulating additional experiences, in and beyond school, are at the heart of children's enjoyment in learning. There are good opportunities for children to become proficient in information and communication technology (ICT). Intensive speaking and reading programmes are raising achievement in English. Children's good personal, social and health education is reflected in their impressive awareness of healthy and safe lifestyles. Children are now involved in many more

science investigations but more work is needed to increase the levels of challenge to bring their skills up to scratch.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good levels of guidance and support enables the school to meet the considerable challenge presented by so many vulnerable children. The quality of care to ensure children's safeguarding is outstanding, not least because of the excellent partnership with outside agencies. It is not unusual for teachers to give up part of their holidays to ensure that children are safe and protected. Every child matters, even those who attend for only a few weeks. For example, a nurture group supports children in coping with disturbing experiences and emotional difficulties. Children's academic learning is closely monitored. Specific learning needs are quickly identified and a highly committed team of support staff work tirelessly to improve children's basic skills. This improves their English and mathematics and helps them in learning other subjects. Children have a clear understanding of their targets for improvement and benefit from good quality marking of their written work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school lost momentum in the absence of a permanent headteacher. Restoring its good reputation united the efforts of the new headteacher, staff and governors. There is a refreshing openness in the way self-evaluation is carried out. Checking children's progress and the quality of teaching is honest and straightforward. For example, the subject leader for science, after examining children's books in one class wrote, 'No evidence of investigations at all.' Teachers understand the point in checking each other's work and have a healthy regard for any weaknesses brought to their attention. Teachers benefit from accurate information on how children are progressing and take responsibility for the progress children make in their year groups. As a result, they leave no stone unturned in their efforts to enlist additional support to boost achievement. Improvements in mathematics in 2005 and English in 2006 have resulted from this rigorous approach. Governors are an integral part of school improvement and fulfil their role well in holding the school to account. The headteacher and key staff have been very successful in providing a climate for learning in which all children are safe and can flourish personally and improve academically.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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?	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	1
The attendance of learners	3
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	2
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?	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	3
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

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful and showing me your best work.

Teachers are doing a good job in helping you improve your achievement. They assess your learning carefully and make sure the work you are given is at the right level. When you find learning difficult, you do not need to worry. Teachers and support staff work hard to help you to understand. Those of you who are learning to speak English are given lots of extra support. I noticed how ready many of you were to translate the words for them. The way you are all taken care of in school is excellent. Not only are you safe but you have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy. Your headteacher, governors and senior staff run the school well. They check that you are learning successfully and do all they can to make your lessons interesting. I know how much you appreciate all the extra activities such as going to France. You deserve a lot of credit for your excellent behaviour, the kind and helpful way you treat each other and for your enthusiasm for learning. The headteacher and staff are working hard to raise standards. There is still more work to be done before standards are as good as they used to be, but there are signs that results in English and mathematics are improving. To raise standards in science, teachers will need to improve your investigation skills and encourage you to write about your findings.

I have two recommendations to make your school even better.

- To raise standards in science, teachers must show you how to investigate and find out for yourselves.
- Rather than spending too much time completing worksheets, using the time to practise and improve your writing would help to raise standards in English. You can help by checking your spelling and punctuation and trying to use more interesting words.