

St Philip's Church of England Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104898
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	287058
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Mike McLachlan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	225
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Graham Tisdall
Headteacher	Mrs Marian Hodgson
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2002
School address	Church Road Litherland Liverpool Merseyside L21 8NZ
Telephone number	0151 9281483
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized primary school serves an area of considerable social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools, Eco Schools and the ActiveMark Gold awards.

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 and improving school that gives good value for money. Robust action taken by the headteacher has raised expectations for both staff and pupils and the drive to improve further is strong. Standards in the current Year 2 and Year 6 are average and show a significant improvement on those reached by the pupils in the national tests in 2006. This represents good achievement from children's starting points, which were below those expected for their age when they joined the Reception class. Quality and standards in the Foundation stage (Reception) are satisfactory and improving. However, the assessment of the specific needs of some children and also the use of outdoor facilities to support children's learning experiences are underdeveloped.

Pupils respond well to the raised expectations. Their personal development is good and behaviour is exemplary. A caring ethos and strong Christian values permeate the life of the school and underpin the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Attendance is above average and improving. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle and how to act safely. Pupils readily enjoy the recognition given to their own and others' achievements, as seen during the excellent Reception class rewards assembly. Pupils contribute well to the school and local community through their school and Eco councils and charitable work. They are well prepared for their future learning.

Teaching is good overall. Strengths include the consistent, challenging and interesting approaches taken to the teaching of literacy and numeracy. This is supported by good planning and tracking of pupils' progress not just in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science but in other subjects too. Pupils' response is positive. They work hard in lessons, collaborate well with their teachers and each other, and show persistence in producing work of length and substance. A good curriculum, which is enhanced by many additional activities, provides a varied and exciting environment that stimulates pupils' interest. As a result, they really enjoy school life.

The school provides good care, guidance and support for its pupils. They feel safe and secure and parents and guardians show great confidence in all that the school offers. Statutory guidance regarding the safeguarding of pupils is followed closely and all the required health and safety checks are undertaken. Recently introduced tracking systems for measuring pupils' progress within each class are good and this rigorous system has been a key factor in raising standards. However, this information is not always used strategically to track the progress each year group is making towards their expected Year 6 targets to ensure pupils make the best progress possible.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher sets high standards and has high expectations which are now shared by all staff. The school accurately identifies its strengths and areas for development. Given the significant improvements which have been made during the last year, the leadership has been somewhat modest when grading standards and provision. This is because the leaders are striving for further improvement. The headteacher has the full confidence of the governing body which provides good support and challenge to the school. Senior and middle managers have a good understanding of what needs to be improved and are enthusiastically implementing the robust and demanding plans introduced following the disappointing test results in 2006. The school draws well on the external support available through links with other schools, local authority services and other agencies to support pupils'

learning and well-being. With this and the improvements made during the last year the school demonstrates a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make more strategic use of the tracking information to monitor pupils' progress as they move through school to help them achieve as well as they can.
- Improve the provision in the Foundation Stage in order to make better use of outdoor areas and to more effectively meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter Reception with standards that are below those expected for their age. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards in Years 1 to 6 are broadly average, representing good achievement from pupils' starting points. This demonstrates a substantial improvement on the previous year as the standards reached in the 2006 tests in Years 2 and 6 were below average. This improvement is a direct result of effective strategies to improve the quality of teaching of literacy and numeracy combined with the introduction of a rigorous approach to identifying pupils' standards and tracking their progress. In the Foundation Stage children make satisfactory progress rather than good because the individual needs of those children with learning difficulties are not precisely identified soon enough. However, by the time they reach Year 6 these pupils make good progress overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy their time in school and respond readily and enthusiastically to all that it offers. They become confident and mature young citizens who are proud of what they have learned. As one pupil said, having watched the joyful Reception class achievement assembly, 'When you look back a few years, that's how I was. Now look what I can do. I really enjoy this school.' Attendance has improved significantly and is now above average. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils take part in lessons and out-of-class activities with real enthusiasm. They have a good understanding of health and safety issues. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They readily take on responsible roles through their work as Eco councillors or as monitors, helpers and buddies. They work and play well together adopting safe practices and caring for each other if needed. They show empathy for those less fortunate in their charitable work. Pupils demonstrate a good awareness of their future needs and are confident to move on to the next stage in their school career.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Activities are both interesting and practical. Praise and rewards are used well to motivate pupils. Good assessment procedures ensure pupils know their targets and what to do to improve their work. In excellent lessons, pupils display high levels of literacy skills and are actively involved in assessing their own and each other's work. For example, in a Year 5 literacy lesson pupils were able to understand the differences between cultures and show a high level of sophistication in understanding a complex text and adapting

it for a younger audience. In a minority of lessons, where teaching is satisfactory, teachers spend too long introducing the topic so pupils have insufficient time to work independently. In these sessions, work is not matched to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. The quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation stage is satisfactory with good features. Good use is made of open questions and children show good motivation. However, the work set does not always meet the specific learning and personal needs of those children with learning difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is planned and organised carefully to build on pupils' previous learning. Due consideration is given to the enjoyment and pride pupils have of their work. For example, a Year 5 pupil wrote to the Prime Minister regarding child slavery and received a reply which was ceremoniously delivered to the class! Consequently the pupils saw, in a real sense, writing for a purpose. Despite the strong focus on basic skills, staff work hard to ensure pupils' experiences across other subjects remains strong. The walls are adorned with a wealth of work in many subjects and themes such as art, healthy eating and multicultural awareness. The Foundation Stage curriculum is satisfactory. Children are provided with a broad range of experiences, although the good outdoor area is not always used effectively to support their learning. Good links with a local specialist language college enable pupils of all ages to take part in Spanish lessons. There is a wide range of extra-curricular provision, visits, residential experiences and peripatetic musical instrument teaching. A highlight of the school year is the 'graduation' of pupils from the 'Children's University', a service provided by a local university to recognise pupils' consistent attendance at extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is good. Parents support this view and talk about 'the warmth and liveliness' of the school and that the school is 'proactive in addressing areas of concern.' The school has a very welcoming atmosphere and staff show high levels of concern to ensure that their pupils feel safe and valued. The school meets the required guidance regarding the safeguarding of pupils. Systems are in place to monitor pupils' progress in lessons and to give them guidance on how to improve their work. Pupils have a good awareness of their key 'seasonal targets' and take delight in quoting them verbatim and explaining what they need to do to improve. Although overall care and guidance in the Foundation stage are good, the assessment systems used to identify the specific developmental needs of the minority of pupils with learning difficulties are underdeveloped. Good induction arrangements ensure pupils and parents feel confident when starting at school or moving on to the next stage of education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for improving the school. Staff are using consistently the recently introduced tracking system to sharpen their teaching and improve the rate of progress pupils make within lessons. However, this system is not used strategically to check if the overall progress made by each year group is sufficient to

reach the school's targets set for the end Year 6. The headteacher and subject coordinators monitor pupils' and teachers' work robustly but sensitively, and this support, together with good in-service training opportunities, is steadily improving the quality of teaching and learning. The quality of the leadership in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Further work is required to ensure curriculum and assessment arrangements are in line with the most effective practice in this stage. The school has overwhelming support from parents. Links with the local schools and the local authority are strong and they have contributed significantly to the recent improvements in standards and achievement. The governing body provides good challenge and support to the school to ensure that the strategies to raise standards are taking effect. The school is not complacent and has a strong desire to bring about further improvements.

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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?	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	3
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	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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.

Annex A

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	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

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

I am writing to thank you for the way you made us feel so welcome in your school during our two days with you. We were very impressed by the way you so confidently talked to us about your school and how clearly you enjoyed taking part in the lessons and other activities we observed. You were a credit to yourselves, the school staff and your parents and guardians.

You go to a good and improving school. The school provides you with an exciting range of lessons and other activities so that you are able to make good progress and reach the standards expected for 11 year olds by the time you leave. You become mature young citizens during your time in school and are good at taking responsibility for yourselves and each other. You focus well on healthy eating, and being and feeling safe. The work of your school council and Eco council are good examples of this.

Your Reception class achievement assembly was delightful. We were very impressed by how the older pupils we spoke to enjoyed seeing the progress made by the younger children. They were very proud of how much they had achieved since they were in Reception and said this was because of the good teaching and good care and support they had received. We agree with their judgements.

Your school is well led and your headteacher, staff and governors know what is needed to make your school even better and have good plans to make this happen. We agree with your headteacher that the outdoor area in Reception could be used more and that some children needed a little more help to make even more progress. We have asked your teachers to check that the progress you are making in each year group is fast enough so that you reach your Year 6 targets by the time you leave school.

You can play your part in making your school even better by coming to school every day and continuing to work and play as hard as we saw during our time with you. Thank you again for the way you represented your school and made our time with you so enjoyable.