



St Robert Bellarmine Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 104906
Local Authority Sefton
Inspection number 287060
Inspection date 22 November 2006
Reporting inspector Dee Brigstock

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Harris Drive
School category	Voluntary aided		Bootle
Age range of pupils	3–11		Merseyside L20 6ED
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 9221216
Number on roll (school)	222	Fax number	0151 9222282
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev Father Harnett
		Headteacher	Mrs Mairead Dowell
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection date 22 November 2006	Inspection number 287060
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Robert Bellarmine is slightly larger than average. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual time is small and the demand for places exceeds supply because of the school's good reputation in the local community. The school serves a community of mixed social and economic circumstances and attainment on entry is below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The majority of pupils are from a White British background but a few pupils from other ethnic backgrounds are included. Four pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, most of whom have specific learning needs. No pupils have a statement of special educational need. The headteacher was appointed in September 2006. The school is actively pursuing 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: 2

This is a good school, which has improved well since the last inspection. It provides good value for money. Children enter the Nursery with below average standards and by Year 6, the standards they attain are above average. All pupils achieve well throughout the school. At the heart of the school's success are its strong Christian aims which guide pupils' good attitudes to work and their respect for each other. Leadership is positive and effective. The headteacher and her deputy headteacher lead a team of enthusiastic and talented staff. The example they set in their partnerships with colleagues and in their sheer hard work, sets the tone for school improvement.

Good care, guidance and support are appreciated by pupils and parents who are very positive that pupils feel safe in school and that vulnerable pupils are supported well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have frequent, well targeted support from external agencies as well as extra help from permanent staff. They achieve well. As a result of this support, pupils' personal development is good, as shown in their good behaviour and confidence that rare instances of bullying are sorted out. Their enjoyment of school is outstanding, illustrated by their attitudes to learning in classes, willingness to take on extra responsibilities and above average attendance. Indeed, due to the introduction of rewards for good attendance, pupils are anxious not to have any days off school. This enjoyment is also the result of good teaching. Pupils learn well because they have good relationships with staff, and teachers' marking guides them accurately on how to improve further. Teachers' use of accurate assessments to set pupils' targets is good and pupils are beginning to use this information to assess some of their own learning. For example, they enjoy their 15 minutes a day practice in mathematics on computers saying, 'It helps your maths and helps the teachers - tells them, and us, what you don't know.'

The good curriculum broadens pupils' knowledge of the wider world through educational visits and through bringing visitors into school. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to stay fit and healthy, promoted well by a wide range of extra-curricular sports clubs. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good, and includes interesting, practical activities to promote enjoyment and a love of learning. However, there are inequalities between the provision for Nursery and Reception children. The nursery is a new, purpose built unit with a good outdoor classroom. Reception children have limited access to an inner courtyard, which has a hard paved surface and is unsuitable for their needs. This restricts their learning in outdoor education. Plans are in place to improve this facility.

The headteacher has involved all subject coordinators in writing the school improvement plan, which clearly identifies the strategies and timescales to improve the school's provision. For example, it includes plans and a timescale to widen pupils' knowledge of other cultures, and to raise standards in mathematics further by providing additional opportunities for pupils to learn how to solve problems. Extra lessons in writing, designed to increase the number of pupils attaining above average standards, have also been put into place. Subject coordinators have embraced their recent training in

leadership and management and their new roles in leading and managing their areas of responsibility are being embedded well. In contrast, the school's evaluation of its work is satisfactory. Although largely accurate, judgements on pupils' personal development and how effectively pupils are guided to improve further are too generous. More emphasis is placed on the intent of planned actions rather than the outcomes. Therefore, the school's capacity to improve is good rather than outstanding. Governors are committed and supportive but their involvement in evaluating the school's effectiveness and in planning future development is too recent to be good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the clarity and precision of the school's self-evaluation and include all leaders and governors in judging the school's effectiveness.
- Improve the quality and use of the outdoor classroom for Reception children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. From attainment which is below average when they enter the Nursery, children progress well through the Foundation Stage. Continuously good teaching and learning, coupled with pupils' good attitudes and enjoyment of school, result in standards being average by Year 2 and above average by Year 6. The school is now focusing on raising standards in English and mathematics further for the average attaining pupils, by providing them with additional teaching on how to write well and weekly lessons in problem solving in mathematics. In 2006, the results were lower than in previous years because of a higher than usual number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in this cohort; these pupils also achieved well from their lower starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, and social development, is good and reflects the school's strong Christian aims. A Year 6 pupil commented, 'We go to church on feast days and we all join in.' Their understanding of their own culture is good but their knowledge of other cultures is limited. Pupils are thoughtful and kind to younger children and they behave well. This good behaviour plays a significant part in their good achievement and learning. A group of Year 6 pupils report that the headteacher has 'high standards for good manners,' one commenting, 'I've got better. I've had targets to improve my manners - and rewards.' Pupils have a good awareness of how to stay fit, healthy and safe. They eagerly take part in, and enjoy, the well organised physical activities and good food at lunchtimes. Pupils' enjoyment of school is outstanding and their attendance is above average. Because they attend school regularly and arrive on time, pupils develop good work habits. Their understanding of the world of work is enhanced further by a good partnership with

local business. Older pupils are proud of their teamwork in making clown mobiles, and designing and printing business cards and posters using ICT.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are planned well to build on pupils' previous learning, are varied and often include interesting, practical learning activities, including the use of ICT. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers, contributing effectively to pupils' achievement. In the lessons visited during the inspection, pupils were always busily involved in their work and very well behaved. Classrooms are uncluttered and bright. Displays focus clearly on what pupils are currently learning and include hints and advice on how to improve their work further. Teachers' marking is good and refers directly to pupils' targets. Teachers' shared understanding of what constitute different standards in English, mathematics and science is satisfactory and improving, following recent training.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum promotes pupils' basic skills, their enjoyment of learning and their personal and social development well. It is well matched to pupils' needs from the Nursery to Year 6 and is considerably enriched by the out of school activities on offer, including residential visits. Pupils are enthusiastic about the extra trips and visits the headteacher has organised and the fact that she has 'brought a singing teacher in'. Pupils' learning about other faiths is satisfactory. Their learning about other cultures through, for example, art and music is underdeveloped. This is a target for improvement identified by the school, as is the introduction of a modern foreign language. Effective individual teaching plans ensure that pupils with learning difficulties progress well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents understandably feel that their children are well cared for and supported. Some parents, at the headteacher's request, come into school twice a week to prepare toast for playtimes and pupils really appreciate this. Every effort is made to ensure pupils are safe and secure and procedures are fully in place for child protection and for vetting staff. Risk assessments are thorough.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and other groups of vulnerable children are well supported, including by external agencies. The school has set challenging targets for pupils to achieve. Teachers' guidance on how individuals could improve their work is good so pupils can explain not only what they need to do to improve further but how they are doing it. Older pupils have detailed checklists to

complete to assess what they know and can do, leading them to take ownership of some aspects of their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

From part of the very positive feedback from parents, this quote sums up the headteacher's influence. 'She has brought new energy and ideas.' Since taking up her appointment in September, the headteacher, very ably supported by the deputy headteacher, and informed by her monitoring the school's work, has made several, effective changes to improve the school. She has developed a stronger management team who take an active part in school improvement planning, and involved governors more in making decisions about the school's priorities, which they greatly appreciate. The deputy headteacher has developed a detailed tracking system and trained staff in its use so that pupils' progress is measured more accurately. Pupils know that they are benefiting from these changes because they, through their school council, are consulted on decisions and are well informed. They cite the development of the library as being important to their learning and the introduction of circle time as an effective way to discuss any problems they have. Leaders accurately identify ways in which the school could improve further, including how standards could be raised, and carefully plan how the school will achieve these aims. These plans have been in place for less than a full term but are already beginning to bear fruit as shown by the enthusiasm and competence of staff, the quality of work in pupils' books, their good attitudes and excellent enjoyment of school.

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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	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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	2
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.

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	3
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 me feel so welcome in your school and for telling me so much when I asked you questions. I hope you see that I have included some of your comments in my report. I really enjoyed talking with you and looking at your work.

I think you should be proud of your school and your work. It is a good school and you make good progress from the time you start school until you are ready to leave. The things I particularly appreciated are:

- your school is a very friendly, safe and pleasant place to be, you really enjoy coming to school and appreciate the changes, such as extra singing, that have happened this term
- you are confident in expressing your opinions and in asking questions
- your teachers plan your lessons well, make lessons lively, expect you to work hard and their marking is helpful
- everyone seems to get on well with one another almost all of the time, and your behaviour is good
- your headteacher and teachers are doing a good job in always trying to make the school a little bit better and they know how to do it.

I have asked your school to do two things to make it even better.

- Include more staff and governors in deciding how well the school is doing.
- Improve the outdoor classroom for the Reception children, because it is not very interesting.

I hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make your school a good place to be.