

St John's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104920
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	287064
Inspection dates	1–2 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Derek Aitken

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Baker
Headteacher	Mr R Miller
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2002
School address	Denmark Street Waterloo Liverpool Merseyside L22 9RG
Telephone number	0151 928 5685
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Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school, which is situated on the northern outskirts of the city, is smaller than average. Forty-seven pupils were added to the roll in June 2005, following the closure of a neighbouring school. Pupils come from a variety of social backgrounds, but the surrounding area is characterised by higher than average levels of unemployment. This is reflected in the above average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, as is the number of pupils with English as an additional language, although none of the latter is at an early stage of learning English. The headteacher and deputy headteacher took up their posts in April 2006 and 2007 respectively. The school has gained several awards, including the information and communication technology (ICT) mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with strengths in the ways it enhances the personal well-being of pupils and the high standard of pastoral care it provides. Steady development of the services provided under the Extended Schools initiative support continuous improvements in the school's work in these aspects. The school has faced many challenges in the last two years, resulting from major changes in the pupil population and staffing. It has coped well with these and succeeded in maintaining the quality of education it provides. Senior leaders are aware of the key priorities for future development and the necessity for improving monitoring, evaluation and to review systems to raise standards. Overall, the school has made satisfactory improvement since its last inspection and has satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Pupils achieve satisfactorily. Children usually enter school with below average levels of knowledge and skills for their age. They get off to a satisfactory start in Reception and make good progress in their personal development because learning is well focused on developing their social skills. Pupils make satisfactory progress, thereafter, to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. However, too few pupils reach the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. Boys and girls generally do equally well but in both key stages weaknesses in writing skills hamper progress and more able pupils are not fully stretched. Some initiatives have recently been implemented to improve standards in writing, targeted mainly at Year 6 pupils. These are helping to raise standards in this class but have yet to be extended fully to benefit the younger pupils.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It supports pupils' personal development well by ensuring pupils act sensibly and relate well both to each other and to adults. Pupils are aware of how to stay safe. They have good attitudes towards health and show this through their eating habits and keen participation in a wide range of physical activities. They are making good use of new opportunities to exercise responsibility and to contribute to the school community. There are, however, insufficient ways for pupils to reinforce their basic skills, especially in writing in other subjects.

Teachers get on well with pupils and make good use of ICT to engage pupils in their learning. However, they do not always plan effectively to ensure a brisk pace to learning and to meet the needs of the more able. Pupils are well cared for. They say, 'there's always an adult who can help us out'. New pupils are made to feel very welcome and settle in quickly. Academic guidance is satisfactory, but there is scope to improve the quality of target-setting and assessment. Most parents and carers are fully supportive of the work of the school. The school makes good use of partnerships with other agencies and institutions, and offers satisfactory value for money.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in English, mathematics and science with particular focus on raising the achievement of more able pupils.
- Improve monitoring, evaluation and review systems and ensure they are firmly focused on raising standards.

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good.
- Provide more opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to reinforce basic skills, especially in literacy.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

On entry to Reception, children's skills and knowledge are usually below the expected levels. Entry levels for the present class are broadly average and the children are making satisfactory progress. The majority are on course to achieve the expected early learning goals in all areas of learning, but progress is most pronounced in personal and social development. Thereafter, pupils build satisfactorily on their earlier attainment, but progress has been more consistent in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. In 2006, standards in the Year 2 national tests were below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in the present Year 2 are a little higher. Standards in Year 6 in 2006 were broadly average, but few pupils achieved the higher levels. Results in English dipped, due to weaker performance in writing. Pupils currently in Year 6 are now back on course to meet appropriate targets, after disappointing results at the end of Year 5. Recent initiatives to improve writing skills are having a positive impact on standards for these pupils. Writing remains a priority for further development, as does the need to improve achievement in English, mathematics and science since too few pupils gain the higher levels, especially in English. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language also make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy their school, behave considerately and cooperate well with their fellow pupils and the staff. Most find learning fun and are keen to do well at work and play. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their self-esteem is underpinned by the frequent praise and encouragement they receive from their teachers and also the recognition of their achievements in assemblies. Christian values are effectively promoted and a link with Sierra Leone provides a useful focus for developing pupils' multicultural awareness. Participation in physical activities is high. Nutritional lunches and the healthy tuck shop also encourage a good awareness of healthy life choices. Pupils clearly understand how to stay safe. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils are beginning to have a say in what goes on in school. Following the recent establishment of the school council, they have brought about improvements to playground equipment. There are increasing opportunities for Year 6 to exercise responsibility, for example, as trained playleaders. These initiatives help pupils acquire a satisfactory command of the teamwork skills they need for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers use a wide range of practical activities to encourage pupils to work cooperatively, and new technology to capture their interest. Classroom routines are well established, relationships are good and frequent use is made of praise and encouragement to motivate pupils. When teaching is good, the pace of lessons is brisk and questioning is precise. Pupils are regularly involved in assessing and

improving their learning, and teaching assistants are pro-active in supporting groups of learners. There is scope for these elements of good practice to be shared more widely to secure consistency in the quality of learning in all classes. Teachers plan lessons in detail, but the planning does not always meet the needs of all pupils, especially the more able, effectively. This is because of some weaknesses both in the presentation and use of learning objectives and the under use of assessment. Activities at the start of lessons are often too long and not clearly linked to the main part. In these cases, learning is not clearly directed and time is not fully utilised. While marking is regular, it does not consistently indicate how pupils can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum, including the Foundation Stage curriculum, enables pupils to develop their basic skills satisfactorily. It provides well for the personal development of the older pupils. Consequently, they acquire a good awareness of staying safe, keeping healthy and behaving responsibly. Teachers and pupils make good use of ICT to support and enhance enjoyment of learning. In the last two years, the curriculum has been successfully adapted to enable the switch to single-age classes to proceed smoothly, but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in other subjects. There is a satisfactory range of programmes to support pupils who find learning difficult. Gifted and talented pupils benefit from useful opportunities to develop their skills in after-school activities, as, for example, in the school journal. The wide variety of after-school activities promotes pupils' enjoyment and interest in school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Procedures for health and safety, child protection and the safe recruitment of staff are clearly established. The school motto 'the small school with the big heart' is evident in practice. There are good systems and procedures for ensuring that pupils feel settled in school. Pupils acknowledge this concern for their welfare and know who to turn to if they are troubled. Often this is the learning mentor, who also provides a valuable service in following up attendance issues. Good links with outside agencies ensure that barriers to learning are removed successfully. Steady improvements under the Extended Schools scheme also help to integrate children well into school and provide parents with good opportunities to support their children's learning. Parents report very favourably on how staff deal quickly and sympathetically with their concerns. Arrangements to prepare pupils for transfer to secondary school are effective, due to close liaison with the receiving secondary school. While tracking systems are in place to check on how well pupils progress, there is scope for improvement in the way these and individual targets are used to support their achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. Over the past two years, leaders have had to deal with significant changes in the composition of the pupil body at a time of considerable turnover in staffing at all levels. Much of this work has devolved on the headteacher and he has managed the changes well, while ensuring standards have been maintained. A new

deputy headteacher has just taken up his appointment but both his and the management roles of others, have still to be sharply defined. Middle leaders are not rigorously focused on raising standards through close monitoring of their subjects. A useful calendar for more extensive monitoring of the school's work is now being established to chart the way forward. Leaders have an accurate view of most of the key priorities and the school development plan offers an appropriate framework for enabling improvement to happen. Neither the timescales nor benchmarks for measuring improvement are, however, precise enough. Teaching and learning are being monitored more extensively through focused lesson observations, but evaluations do not indicate how areas for development will be followed up. The governing body has piloted the school capably through the recent changes, but has not yet developed its role as 'critical friend'.

Annex A

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?	2
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	3
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	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
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	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

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

Inspection of St John's Church of England School, Liverpool, L22 9RG

I visited your school this week to find out how well you are learning. Thank you for making me welcome and being helpful when I talked to you in the playground, canteen and classrooms. I was lucky to have the opportunity to speak to some of you at greater length in your smart ICT room and was impressed by your clear enjoyment of school. I also noted your good team spirit in the way you celebrated each other's successes in assembly.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. I agree with you that the staff look after you well. The teachers ensure that you all know how to behave sensibly and treat others with respect. They give you lots of encouragement and praise and try hard to make your learning fun by giving you opportunities to use the interactive whiteboard. The staff have worked very hard to ensure that all the pupils who joined the school when their old school closed, felt at home in their new surroundings. I was also impressed by the wide range of clubs and activities offered to enable you to follow up your interests and develop your talents.

There are some things that I have asked the headteacher and staff to do to make your learning better. First, I want them to ensure that you reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science to prepare you better for secondary school and later life. I asked them to check especially that those pupils who learn faster always get the type of work which will stretch them to do their best. For these things to happen, I pointed out that the staff will need to give closer attention to checking the quality of the school's work. I also asked them to make sure that teaching and learning are consistently good for all pupils. Finally, I have asked them to ensure that they give you more opportunities to practise in subjects other than English the skill you are weakest in, namely, writing. Your teachers often tell you that you can improve your work by checking it over to see if it makes sense. That is good advice. See if you can remember to do it regularly!