



Our Lady and St Edward's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 105086
Local Authority Wirral
Inspection number 287122
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector Jane Hughes

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Price Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Birkenhead
Age range of pupils	4–11		Merseyside CH41 8DU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 6523366
Number on roll (school)	215	Fax number	0151 6523366
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr James Shannon
		Headteacher	Mrs Elaine McGunigall
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–11	6–7 December 2006	287122

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school in an area with significant disadvantage. More than half the pupils are eligible for free school meals, a far higher than average number. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Although a small proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational need, a far larger than average proportion have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. On site, pre-school provision is now helping young children to join the school with better personal and social skills. Current Year 6 pupils are the final year group not to experience this provision. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award and two Achievement Awards (2000, 2001). It uses Excellence in Cities funding to support the role of the home-school development worker and to part fund the work of the specialist sports coach.

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 with some outstanding elements. The school's own evaluation of its work is generally accurate, although it is overly self-critical in its judgements of pupils' personal development and the quality of the curriculum. Inspectors judge both aspects to be outstanding. The school has improved significantly over the past six years because good, stable leadership and management provide a relentless focus on improving standards and raising pupils' achievement. Issues from the last inspection have been tackled effectively. Efficient governors ensure that the school provides good value for money. Coupled with a strengthening academic profile, these characteristics give the school good capacity for further improvement. The school's caring routines reflect its core mission values. The well-being of pupils is at its heart. Pupils develop a strong working knowledge of how to live safe and healthy lives. They know what characterises productive citizenship, and possess academic and personal skills vital to their future economic well-being.

Pupils do well here because challenging and supportive leadership at all levels ensures good quality teaching and learning. High order personal and social skills also support pupils' good achievement. Pupils arrive in Reception with skills below national expectations, particularly in their language and mathematical skills. Their personal, social and emotional skills are more developed because of the impact of on-site pre-school provision. Good provision in the Foundation Stage helps young children to settle quickly and achieve well. By Year 6, pupils attain broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. This represents good achievement for all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, relatively fewer higher attaining pupils reach the higher levels of attainment. Teachers do not yet make full use of the data available to them to check the progress of such groups of pupils. An outstanding curriculum provides a first class support vehicle for strong teaching. The innovative extended day, coupled with opportunities to learn French and Spanish from Reception upwards and expert sports coaching, offer all pupils the very best opportunities to widen their experiences. Parents understandably place high value on these opportunities as they prepare pupils well for life beyond school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from vulnerable backgrounds are very well supported by skilful teaching assistants and experienced special needs staff. However, within this positive teaching picture, the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. It does not always offer enough guidance to pupils on how to improve their work and so attain the higher levels.

There is an overarching atmosphere of care and support for the whole school family, including parents and the wider community. The school fosters a strong partnership with parents through various home-school links. For example, the very successful family learning programme is a key strength and demonstrates effective use of funding to help parents improve their employment prospects.

Parents say the school 'bends over backwards' to support their needs. Increasingly, parents go on to study for new qualifications and a more secure future. The school's

work with outside agencies is very successful. First class partnerships with various providers ensure that pupils receive the best possible support at times of real need.

Excellent relationships between adults and pupils ensure that pupils always feel valued. As a result, their personal development is exemplary. Pupils develop into confident and trustworthy individuals who value their school and the wider community. The school does its very best to promote regular attendance through the role of the home-school development worker. Attendance levels are improving, although a few pupils' attendance remains below average. Good levels of care, guidance and support nurture pupils and effectively safeguard their well-being. Pupils are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about their own learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards reached by the more able pupils at Year 6 so more attain the higher levels.
- Ensure that teachers' marking provides pupils with clear next steps in their learning so they know how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most children enter the Reception year with weaknesses in their communication, language, literacy and mathematical skills. Overall, their skills are below those expected for their age. Children settle very well and make good progress because of the relative strength of their initial personal and social skills. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage because of good teaching and high expectations, although standards by Year 1 remain below national expectations. In 2006, standards in Year 2 rose considerably and were above average, although the improvement was not quite as strong in writing. As a result of more targeted teaching, Year 6 standards rose sharply in 2006 and were in line overall with the national average. Year 6 English scores were the best ever for the school. Standards were above the national average in English and mathematics, exceeding challenging targets. This represents good achievement by all groups of pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good rates of progress as others because of the effective support they receive to meet their targets. However, the school recognises that it still has work to do to raise even further the attainment and achievement of the more able pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy their learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The parish priest is closely involved in school life and community links are very strong. Pupils establish strongly supportive relationships with staff and each other. Older pupils have the maturity to recognise that behaviour is much improved. They are familiar with staff reminding them: 'Your

behaviour is your responsibility.' Pupils have an increasing appreciation of a diverse range of cultural issues. Lessons often provide links to their own historical heritage and this brings learning to life for them. Specialist sports coaching ensures that regular exercise and eating healthily are a high priority and that pupils learn good habits for their future well-being. A few pupils have fractured attendance patterns, reducing the overall attendance levels. The school, through the home-school development worker, does all it can to improve attendance levels.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Knowledgeable teachers plan interesting activities. Pupils say these 'make learning fun' and they clearly enjoy their learning. Teachers' questioning is a real strength as it encourages the active involvement of pupils in their learning and improves their understanding in lessons. Pupils respond with enthusiasm to questions and remain engaged in their work, so making the most of lessons. There is good use of interactive whiteboards to stimulate pupils' interest. Teachers and skilful teaching assistants work well together and offer vibrant support for pupils of differing abilities. This ensures that all pupils are equally motivated to learn. Nevertheless, adults do not use learning objectives consistently enough in lessons to involve pupils fully in their own learning or to assess their own progress. Marking is positive, but inconsistent in the way it illustrates how pupils might improve their work. All adults promote first class relationships with and between pupils. They manage pupils' behaviour very consistently and set rigorous challenges and high expectations. These draw out pupils' learning and help them achieve well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum extends well beyond what is required. Basic literacy and numeracy skills develop well through topics relevant to pupils and these engage their curiosity. The curriculum caters well for all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, through well supported small- group sessions. The innovative extended day provision enables every pupil to participate daily in extra-curricular activities such as art, music, team games and modern foreign languages. An extensive range of after-school activities from Year 1 upwards improves pupils' skills still further. Specialist sports coaching brings outstanding benefits as it improves pupils' and teachers' skills in lessons and after school. Pupils delight in winning local sports tournaments while embracing the benefits of active lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Caring staff ensure that pupils are happy and safe in school as pupils' welfare is of the highest importance. Child protection procedures are in place and checks on staff follow the most recent guidance. The school is mindful of the needs of the most vulnerable. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive particularly effective support to achieve as well as other pupils because specialist staff identify individual needs at an early stage. The school promotes healthy and safe living well through a clear focus on nutrition and active living. Emotional health receives increasing attention and builds pupils' self-esteem. Staff gather data regularly to monitor individual pupils' progress. Although the school does this well, newer tracking systems do not yet identify specific groups of pupils, such as higher attainers, in order to check their progress and ensure that each group receives the most appropriate support. Parents say that the school cares for and guides their children very well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Parents 'cannot praise the headteacher highly enough'. The leadership guides the school very effectively. As a result, pupils achieve well and standards are rising. There is outstanding commitment to improvement and equality of opportunity at all levels so pupils reach increasingly challenging targets. Even so, there is more to be done in enabling all pupils to achieve their best, particularly the more able pupils. Subject leaders are clear about how they effect improvement. Effective systems monitor, evaluate and improve all aspects of the school's work. For example, the school's improvement plan sets out simply what needs to develop and how this will happen so staff and governors are clear. Careful financial management along with highly effective administrative, lunchtime and ancillary staff ensure that the school runs smoothly. Governors offer appropriate challenge and support to ensure further improvement.

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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?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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?	2
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?	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	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your welcome when we visited your school. It was a pleasure to see you working in lessons and enjoying learning so much. Our initial tour with your Head Girl and Head Boy was a super introduction to your school. We saw how enthusiastic you all are about the fun activities and learning experiences your teachers organise. We were particularly impressed with all the art and craft work you do with visiting artists.

Many of you told us how much you enjoy being members of the OLSE family. You feel that the school gets better and better. We agree that there are many things to be proud of in your good school. You do better in your tests and achieve well. Last year, Year 6 got the best results ever in English, so well done to them. Everyone is very kind and friendly in your busy and cheerful school. Specialist teachers help you and your teachers to develop new skills, such as in PE: you relish the opportunity to play in local sports tournaments - and you're winning now! All the adults take very good care of you and help you with any problems. Your parents told us how happy you all are at school.

One of the reasons for our visit was to see how your school could improve. We have asked all the adults in school to help you do even better in your English, mathematics and science work so everyone who can reach higher standards by Year 6. We have also asked your teachers to give you a clearer idea of how to make each piece of work even better when they mark your books.

You can be very helpful by continuing to do your best, working and playing hard. Some of you do not come to school every day and so you miss lots of work and fun with your friends. Try to remind everyone at home that you need to come to school every single day. We are sure you will remember this because it's so important - and you can help to win rewards for your class in the attendance competition.