



Our Lady and St Philomena's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131837
Local Authority Liverpool
Inspection number 293862
Inspection date 1 November 2006
Reporting inspector John Atkinson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Sparrow Hall Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Liverpool
Age range of pupils	3–11		Merseyside L9 6BU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 5258552
Number on roll (school)	293	Fax number	0151 5232499
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ms Sheila Jones
		Headteacher	Ms Maria Michniewski
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection date 1 November 2006	Inspection number 293862
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school is larger than average and is situated in the Sparrowhall estate in the north of Liverpool. The area that pupils come from has high levels of social deprivation and unemployment and the proportion of children entitled to free school meals is well above average. Attainment on entry to the school is below average with some children having poor communication skills and limited knowledge and understanding of the world. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average and the number of pupils with statements of special educational need is average. There are 11 pupils who do not have English as their first language.

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 features and it gives good value for money. The ethos of the school is the key to its success. The headteacher leads the school with commitment and passion and, together with a dedicated staff, establishes a safe and secure environment in which all pupils thrive. The calm and purposeful approach to all aspects of school life fosters high levels of confidence and self-esteem within pupils. Pupils really enjoy coming to Our Lady's because, as one Year 6 pupil put it, 'learning is fun and this school is fantastic'. Pupils are very proud of their school and a strong community spirit ripples throughout every aspect of its work. Parents are highly supportive and appreciate the impact that the hard work of the staff has upon their children. As one parent commented, 'the school has not only met her needs educationally but it has enriched her life through building confidence and self-worth, not only in my child but in every child'.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding and is the platform for other successes. The relationships between pupils and staff are excellent and built upon mutual trust and respect. Pupils have a real 'say' in their school. They are articulate and bursting with enthusiasm to voice their opinions, take decisions and contribute to their local community. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in the improvements in attendance and a reluctance to take time off even when they are ill. They are enthusiastic learners and want to do their very best in everything. The school is very effective in motivating pupils and sets challenging targets for them to reach. Pupils feel secure about asking for help and support and are always willing to help each other with any difficulties. The outcome is that pupils' achievements are good and provides the foundation for them to be successful in later life. When children start school they have limited communication skills and a limited understanding of the wider world. They get a flying start to their education through the very good provision and teaching in the Foundation Stage. They quickly make good progress so that when they start Year 1 they are achieving national expectations. By Year 2, pupils are achieving above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This good progress is sustained throughout the junior classes and by the time pupils leave school the majority are achieving above average standards in English, mathematics and science. There is room for improvement for a small number of boys who do not make enough progress with their writing. There is particularly good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities that ensures that they make good progress and achieve what they are capable of.

Pupils achieve well because teaching is good and they experience a varied and stimulating curriculum. Lessons are taught at a brisk pace and the needs of pupils are well planned for. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to work collaboratively as well as to think for themselves. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and as a result always engage and focus on the learning that is taking place.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and reflects the high expectations of the school. They feel entirely safe in school and are absolutely confident that that any problems will be dealt with quickly and fairly. The school provides a healthy environment and this leads to pupils being knowledgeable about healthy living. This is borne out by their

active participation in a wide range of sporting activities and the regular eating of fruit and drinking of water. This is a school where pupils are ambitious, have high aspirations for their futures and are being very well prepared to becoming successful and responsible young citizens.

The school is exceptional in the care and support it gives to pupils. Every child matters to every member of staff, and individual needs - be they learning, social or medical - are particularly well catered for. There is undoubtedly a 'can do' culture throughout the school and each pupil feels valued, respected and challenged. The parent who commented, 'he's got problems but it's no problem' aptly sums up the positive nature of the school and points to a significant factor in its success.

The school is well led and is accurate in knowing its strengths and areas for development. The senior leaders and governors share a common desire to ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good - and it is. The headteacher and assistant headteacher shoulder a large burden of the monitoring of the school's work and it is appropriate that subject leaders are more involved in this role.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the rate of progress that boys make in their writing so that a higher percentage reach the nationally expected levels.
- Extend the responsibility of subject leaders in the monitoring of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and improve their communication skills significantly. Their creative and physical development is enhanced through the good provision and effective use of teaching assistants. A major strength throughout the school is the standard of reading, with the vast majority of pupils achieving well above average standards by the age of 11. More able pupils are pushed to achieve the higher levels and almost half of the pupils achieved Level 5 at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils whose first language is not English reach good standards because of the effective support they are given. Across the curriculum, and particularly in the arts, pupils make enormous strides in their learning and the overall impact is that pupils are developing a wide range of skills that will significantly assist them personally and in their future economic well-being. Although strategies have been put in place to improve the standard of boys' writing, it is still below the challenging standard the school believes it can achieve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development and this is one of the school's undoubted strengths. Routines are very well established and clear boundaries are defined so pupils know what is expected of them. The effect is that pupils feel secure and safe from any form of harassment, leading to exemplary behaviour and respect for every aspect of the whole-school community. Attendance is in line with the national average and continuing to improve. The structured reward system celebrates pupils' successes and is very effective in building and boosting their self-esteem. Pupils are very active in community activities and raise money for a number of charities, increasing their awareness of the needs of others and how they can make a positive contribution to helping them. The school council is an active forum that pupils aspire to be elected to and pupils carry out the many responsible roles given to them with maturity beyond their years.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching has many significant strengths that result in very good gains in learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and plan carefully to ensure that every pupil is fully included in the learning. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together and establish a positive learning climate where pupils feel well supported. Teachers use the excellent assessment and tracking systems to set appropriately challenging targets and use these as the basis for planning the learning activities for the different ability groups in the class. Pupils say that learning is interesting and exciting, that they are never bored and their teachers always help them to do their best.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum and its enrichment are good. There are many opportunities beyond the standard curriculum for pupils to participate in, such as sport, music and languages, including French and Spanish. These are influential in motivating pupils and widening their horizons with the effect that pupils develop a love of learning and a desire to experiment in new activities. Regular visits and visitors are used well to bring the curriculum to life and pupils talk enthusiastically about how these experiences have left a lasting impact on them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is a very safe and caring school and parents feel their children are well looked after both academically and personally. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are very thorough and this means that the most vulnerable or at risk pupils are quickly identified and supported. Child protection arrangements and those to ensure everyone's health, welfare and safety are in place. Pupils are made very aware of what their targets are and how they can achieve them. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are given exceptional guidance and support with their learning targets and this is key to the progress that they make.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides very effective leadership in setting out a clear vision for the school and is very well supported by the assistant headteacher. The leadership has a good grasp of tracking pupils' progress and target-setting, resulting in the good achievement of all pupils, regardless of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The high quality of leadership means that staff feel a full part of a team that continues to strive for excellence and undaunted by new challenges. Subject leaders have had a limited role in the monitoring of the work of the school and are ready and capable of undertaking more responsibility in this aspect. The governors are very supportive of the school and work closely with the headteacher in maintaining the good quality of provision. The school has made good improvement since its last inspection.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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	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	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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	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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	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 very much for making me welcome when I came to visit your school. I was very impressed by your behaviour and attitude towards school. It was a delight for me to see how you help and respect each other and I am sure that this is one of the reasons that you enjoy school so much. You told me that you went to a 'fantastic' school and I agree with you. The headteacher, teachers, teaching assistants and all the other members of staff take very good care of you and give you the help and support to do your best. I think that you all work very hard and that is why you do so well. I think you should be proud that you go to a good school and proud of your own achievements. The reason you go to such a good school is that:

- staff make learning fun and interesting
- staff and pupils always cooperate well and have great respect for each other
- staff have high expectations of you and you respond enthusiastically
- every pupil is treated as an individual.

I think that you can help yourselves and the school by continuing with your very positive attitudes. It is really important that you make the most out of the opportunities school provides for you because then you will be able to achieve your ambitions - and I know from my discussions that you have very high ambitions.

I have discussed with the headteacher what the school can do to get even better and we agreed that it is very important for boys to continue to improve their writing. I hope that all of regard improving your writing as a challenge and I wish you every success for the coming year and in the future.