

Our Lady of The Assumption Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133337
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	294073
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Clare Henderson

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss D Short
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Kirk
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2003
School address	Hartsbourne Avenue Liverpool Merseyside L25 2RY
Telephone number	0151 4879301
Fax number	0151 4870024

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school is situated in Liverpool within an area of regeneration. It serves a community which has considerable social and economic disadvantage. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A few pupils are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has gained the Eco school bronze award. Building work is currently in progress to provide a children's centre at the school.

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 and improving school which provides sound value for money. Standards by the end of Year 6 are broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. However, staffing disruptions, brought about by prolonged staff absences, have slowed the rate at which some pupils learn. This has resulted in some pupils not achieving as well as they could. Children begin school with skills that are below those expected for their age and well below in their communication and social skills. They make satisfactory progress throughout the Foundation Stage. However, standards throughout the school have been particularly low in writing and mathematics. Rigorous systems to track pupils' progress by checking the learning of all groups of pupils have already improved achievement to some degree but the use of assessment and tracking systems is not yet consistent. Consequently, opportunities are missed by some teachers to contribute sufficiently to raising standards in writing and mathematics. Although teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, the progress pupils make varies between classes. The best teaching matches activities well to pupils' differing levels of understanding, but this does not occur as frequently as it should. Teaching is also less effective when it is not clearly explained to pupils, in ways they can easily understand what they are expected to do to improve.

Despite the unsettled period of the last few years, the school's caring, supportive and happy reputation among parents has been maintained. Pupils are enthusiastic about their work and enjoy school. Because staff know pupils well, they really understand their personal and emotional needs. This leads to a climate of trust where positive relationships are established. Consequently, pupils respect their teachers and other adults in the school who help them. The curriculum is satisfactory and has a number of strengths, including good enrichment to support work in the arts, sport and humanities, and opportunities for pupils to learn essential life skills that contribute to their good personal development. Procedures for academic guidance are in place. This aspect is developing, but practice is not consistent in all classes.

Leadership and management are satisfactory with some noteworthy strengths. The good work that the headteacher and her recently appointed deputy headteacher have accomplished is seen in the improvements that are happening in many areas. Notably, in standards of behaviour, which are now excellent, in improved levels of pupils' attendance and in the progress made by pupils in some classes. More rigorous monitoring, tracking and self-evaluation put in place by senior leaders is at the heart of the recent improvements and underpins the school's mostly accurate view of its effectiveness. The school has dealt effectively with the issues identified at the time of the last inspection. Consequently, the school demonstrates good capacity to further improve. Governors give sound support for the work of the school managers, especially in relation to planning for the children's centre.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that lessons consistently challenge pupils to achieve their best.
- Use assessment, planning and tracking systems more effectively to ensure all pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work.

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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

For a number of years the results in tests and assessments in Year 2 and Year 6 have remained consistently below and at times well below the national average. However, the school's recently improved tracking systems are now providing more accurate information to target those pupils who have been underachieving. For example, action to improve progress in mathematics and writing through the introduction of recovery programmes is paying off with a number of pupils beginning to make up lost ground. Standards are now broadly average and most pupils are achieving satisfactorily. However, managers realise that there is still more to be done to ensure all pupils achieve the best they can. Standards in the Foundation Stage are also broadly average and pupils' achievement is generally satisfactory. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with English as an additional language and vulnerable pupils make similar progress to other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn. This is reflected in their excellent behaviour. They know how to keep healthy and safe and are aware of the clear procedures in place at this time, with major building projects presently being undertaken at the school. Pupils treat each other with respect. Bullying incidents are rare and pupils understand what to do if they are in trouble or have a problem. Through serving on the school council pupils become increasingly self-confident and contribute effectively to the school and wider community. This helps them prepare for their future lives. They have a strong resolve to help others less fortunate than themselves. For example, through fund-raising for charities and in gaining the Eco school award. This reflects the caring nature seen throughout the school. Improvements to attendance have been made thanks to successful strategies and support from external agencies.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. In some lessons teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. In those lessons teaching is lively, well focused and pacy. Teachers engage pupils' interest, clarify ideas and specify exactly what pupils are expected to learn. The effective use of short-term targets for the quality of work expected results in pupils of different abilities working really hard. Consistently good relationships in such lessons result in pupils having the confidence to contribute and to take risks. In the satisfactory lessons there are some weaknesses in planning and in the use of assessment. This means that the tasks set for pupils insufficiently match their needs. The lack of rigorous planning is most evident where pupils are provided with too little guidance about what is expected of them and their learning slows. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, enabling these pupils to achieve as well as their peers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The contribution that the curriculum makes to pupils' learning is satisfactory. Curriculum provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. However, planned activities within the Foundation Stage do not always provide children with enough stimulating experiences which will promote their interests and learning sufficiently. The quality of teaching in physical education since the last inspection has improved and is now good. A strength of the curriculum is the education for safety and health and the many opportunities for enrichment, through external visits and visitors to the school that enhance pupils' enjoyment and their willingness to learn. Effective links with the local authority and community partners help the school to provide additional activities which increasingly give pupils better learning opportunities. A successful and much appreciated breakfast club and a wide range of extra-curricular activities after school are well attended and enjoyed by the pupils. These activities contribute well to pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with some strong features. Levels of pastoral care and support are good and parents agree that this is a strength of the school. Staff know the pupils and their families well, which helps them to ensure that each pupil is safe and happy. A typical parent comment is, 'staff always make time to talk to me and to listen to any concern I may have'. Procedures for safeguarding pupils from harm are in place. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective. Staff who work closely with these pupils do a good job in helping them to make progress similar to that of other pupils. Academic guidance given to pupils is satisfactory but many pupils do not have a sufficient understanding of what their targets are or of what they need to do to achieve them. Consequently, pupils are not as aware as they should be of how well they are doing and how they could improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a clear vision of what they want pupils to achieve. They have worked hard to improve many aspects of the school's work and have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas needing improvement. The structure for providing leadership and management at different levels is in place and in most cases is working effectively. However, leaders at all levels are not sufficiently focused on school improvement to ensure that all play a full part in helping to raise standards. Systems for monitoring the quality of planning and the tracking of individual pupils' progress are in place but not yet fully effective in contributing to raising standards. Governors are supportive of the school and they hold the school appropriately to account for its performance. They have a satisfactory understanding of the challenges the school faces and of their role in improving it.

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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	2
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	1
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	2
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?	3

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**

Thank you for your friendly welcome during our recent visit to your school. You were all very polite and helpful. We enjoyed chatting with you and listening to your views. You told us that your school is very friendly and we agree with you. We judge it to be a satisfactory and improving school. There are good things of which you should be proud in your school. You say school rules are fair and we were delighted to see how incredibly well you all behave. You told us how you feel safe and well cared for and we saw how well you get along together in class and on the playground.

One of the reasons for our visit was to see how your school could improve. We think that you could do better in writing and mathematics. We want you to be challenged to do your best in every lesson. We also think that you need to know how well you are doing in your lessons. We would like you to get more help to know how to reach the targets set for your learning. You can help with this by asking your teacher to explain how you can reach your targets if you do not understand.

Carry on working hard and enjoying school.