

St Leo's and Southmead Catholic Primary School

Serving the Community

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104475
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	308611
Inspection date	3 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Gill Jones HMI

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	161
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr John Dale
Headteacher	Mrs Jeanette Grundy
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Lickers Lane Whiston Prescot Merseyside L35 3SR
Telephone number	0151 4778410
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Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: children's achievement, their personal development and well-being, the quality of teaching and learning, and the effectiveness of the leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from observing lessons, scrutinising school documentation and questionnaires completed by parents, and discussions with children, governors, staff and the headteacher.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were justified. Such assessments have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

This average-sized primary school serves the Catholic and non-Catholic community of Whiston in the borough of Knowsley. The number of children increased significantly in 2006 following the closure of the local Southmead Community Primary School. Staff and children from Southmead joined St Leo's Catholic Primary School and the school was renamed to represent the inclusion of both school communities.

The school serves children who live on the local housing estates, where in places there is significant social and economic disadvantage. A third of the children are eligible for free school meals; this is twice the national average. The majority of children are of White British heritage. A small number of children are of minority ethnic heritage, with very few at the early stages of learning English. A high proportion of children have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Five children have a statement of special educational needs. The school has been awarded Healthy Schools Status and the Activemark.

The school's Nursery and Reception class are housed in the new Sure Start Children's Centre, which is adjacent to the school. The centre also accommodates 'Little Treasures', a private company which provides care for nursery children and an after-school club. Its inspection report is available on the Ofsted website.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Leo's and Southmead Catholic Primary School Serving the Community is a good school. It provides an outstanding level of care, guidance and support for the children within a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Children make good progress in their learning and in their personal development. By the end of Year 6, most reach the standards that are expected nationally for 11-year-olds. Since the last inspection, the headteacher has successfully united two schools from very different communities. She has set a good ethos for the new school, which is rooted in Christian values. Parents, governors, staff and children greatly appreciate the care, dedication and strong vision for the future that the headteacher has shown throughout a difficult period of change. Children are proud of their new school.

Overall, children's achievement is good. Since the last inspection standards at Key Stage 1 have varied and in some years are well below the national average. This largely reflects the varying needs and abilities of the children. Currently, in Key Stage 1, children are making good progress. This is shown by the work in their exercise books and the school's own records. In Year 2, most children are working at the levels expected for their age. The standards reached by 11-year-olds have been broadly in line with the national average for the last two years, although they are lower in mathematics than in English. The school is aware of this and has good plans for improvement in place. Standards in the current Year 6 are below average. However, over half the children in this year group have identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities; their standards are below those expected for their age. The school sets challenging targets for all children, including those at the early stages of learning English and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These have been met over the last two years, showing good achievement.

The quality of care, guidance and support the school provides is outstanding. All staff know the children well and are sensitive to their feelings. Vulnerable children are particularly well supported by the high quality care from the learning mentor. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and the extra provision for them is managed well. Teachers' marking is effective, linking well to children's targets and showing them what they have to learn next. The new Children's Centre is being used effectively by the school to provide support for families. Nursery children are particularly well provided for; the introduction of 'seamless care' between the school and 'Little Treasures' is innovative and working well.

Children's personal development and well-being are good. They behave well in lessons and are polite and courteous to visitors. They enjoy school, particularly the sporting activities and the opportunity to be a Year 6 play leader for the younger children. They know how to lead healthy lifestyles and keep safe. The level of consideration children show to those experiencing emotional difficulties in school is impressive. Children enjoy serving on the school council. However, its informal structure does not ensure that children routinely contribute to school developments. The attendance of children is improving, but is still below the national average. The school has taken positive action through its use of rewards and incentives to encourage children to attend regularly.

The quality of teaching and the curriculum are good. Teachers involve the children in their learning, lessons are lively and interesting and the children say they have fun. For example, during the inspection, a child in Year 2 dressed up as Burglar Bill and the children asked him challenging questions. This developed their understanding of the character before they started

to write a description. Teachers have high expectations of what children can achieve. They plan their lessons well to engage the children's attention and encourage them through their judicious use of praise. In a few lessons, mostly in mathematics, the work set does not have the right level of challenge for all children. Consequently, some children become inattentive.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, focused on each child achieving their potential, which is shared by staff and governors. Morale is high. The senior leadership team has recently been enhanced by the appointment of an assistant headteacher and middle leadership is developing well. Subject leaders check the quality of planning and children's work. However, they are not yet fully involved in observing lessons and sharing the good practice in teaching and learning. The school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are well below those typically expected for 3 year olds. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) and by the time they start Year 1 about half have reached the levels expected nationally for five-year-olds. Children's skills are weakest in the areas of communication, language and literacy and in their personal and social development. The curriculum and teaching is adapted effectively to meet these needs and as a result, the number of children meeting expected levels in these aspects of learning for five-year-olds has risen over the past two years.

Children settle well in the Nursery and Reception. They enjoy the activities and respond well to staff. The teaching is good and activities are carefully planned to meet individual children's needs. Records of children's progress are checked regularly and are used to set children challenging targets. While the Reception class does not have a secure outdoor area, which limits their independent learning, there are good quality plans in place for this to happen. The quality of care is excellent and the partnership with 'Little Treasures' is effective. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the standards reached in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics throughout the school.
- Ensure work is always well matched to the needs and abilities of all children.
- Involve all staff in observing lessons and sharing good practice in teaching and learning.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

You may remember that I visited your school recently to carry out an inspection. I enjoyed my visit. It was a pleasure to be welcomed by you in such a polite and friendly way. Thank you for talking to me about your school. I listened very carefully to what you said and this letter is to tell you what I found.

I judged your school to be good. Your parents told me that it is a very calm and happy place for you to learn and I agree. The adults take excellent care of you. They help you to grow up well, to learn how to keep healthy and safe and to be responsible and care for other people. You know about healthy lifestyles, though some of you had a few unhealthy snacks and sweets in your lunch boxes! Children who started school at Southmead were keen to tell me that now you have all joined together as one new school, you get on well with each other and have made good friends. I was impressed by how well you understand each other's needs and are prepared to give time and space to children who need extra help.

You concentrate well in your lessons and I was pleased to see you working hard. You told me that your teachers always try to make learning fun and I saw evidence of that as I visited your classrooms. I could see that you have the confidence to tackle some challenging work; in fact some of you said that is when you most enjoy school!

Mrs Grundy has good plans for the future of your school. Your teachers are very keen for you to make good progress in your work, particularly in mathematics. They are going to make sure that the work set for you is at just the right level to challenge you, whatever your ability. Mrs Grundy and the other teachers are going to watch lessons regularly to check that you are making good progress. Your challenge is to always try your hardest and to aim to reach high standards in your work.

With my very best wishes for the future.