

St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104649
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	308641
Inspection date	7 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Frank Carruthers

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr P Kelly
Headteacher	Mr D Hardiman
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2004
School address	Aviemore Road Liverpool Merseyside L13 3BB
Telephone number	0151 2284137
Fax number	0151 2284137

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	7 May 2008
Inspection number	308641

© Crown copyright 2008

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 one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the achievement of pupils, the quality of teaching and learning, leadership and management including governance, and the capacity to improve. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, data about past performance, discussions with two members of the governing body, senior and other members of staff as well as pupils and some parents, and a scrutiny of school documents and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in as much detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments as given in its self-evaluation form were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than average. It serves an inner suburb of the city that is one of high social deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is high. Most pupils are White British. About 20% are from minority ethnic heritage. Above average proportions are at the early stages of learning English or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Since the last inspection, the school has become part of a Federation (established under School Governance (Collaboration) (England) Regulations 2003), with St Sebastian's Catholic Primary School situated about a mile away. The schools share the same headteacher, senior leadership team and governing body. The school is an Investor in People and has gained the National Healthy Schools Award, the Basic Skills and Dyslexia Friendly Awards and the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good education for its pupils and has a number of outstanding features. These include pupils' personal development and well-being; their care, guidance and support; partnerships with other schools and agencies; and leadership and management.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils enjoy school very much, behave exceptionally well and develop an excellent awareness of how to be safe and lead a healthy lifestyle. They speak enthusiastically about lessons and report that teachers make the lessons fun. Pupils help to make the school an enjoyable and safe place to be, for example through their roles as school councillors and friendship counsellors. They develop well the essential skills of teamwork, independence in learning, literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. These skills prepare them well for their next schools. Levels of attendance are just below the national average and in line with schools in similar localities in the city.

Pupils' achievement is good. From low levels of attainment on entry to the Nursery, pupils attain standards in Year 6 that are average in English, mathematics and science. This is because of good teaching, rigorous assessment and very effective support for pupils who find learning difficult. Standards in Year 6 have improved overall since the last inspection: school data shows this upward trend continuing thanks to challenging targets and high expectations of staff. At the end of Year 2 standards are broadly average, with the highest standards being in reading. This is because of intensive, individual support which makes sure that no pupils slip through the net. Indeed, achievement across the school in reading is exceptional. It is good in mathematics and satisfactory in writing.

The school has identified shortcomings in pupils' writing and recently implemented a pilot programme of support. It is too early to confirm its impact, although there are early signs of some success. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language often make fast progress in a short period of time because of good small-group support from staff.

The quality of teaching and learning is good with outstanding features. Relationships are excellent all round so that pupils listen well and readily join in discussions. New technology, such as interactive whiteboards, is used very well to help explain the teaching and consolidate pupils' learning. Teachers use pupils' responses to questions very well to assess understanding and adjust teaching accordingly. Teaching assistants contribute very well to pupils' learning, especially in helping those with social and emotional needs or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The well planned curriculum reflects the school's external awards. It is being developed to improve pupils' writing. It is highly enriched by themed weeks, special events, visits and several residential trips, some abroad. These provide wonderful experiences for pupils. Spanish is taught throughout the school and there are strong international links with Spain which give pupils a good understanding of a different community to their own. Personal, social and health education provides plentiful opportunities for discussion and makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal and emotional development. An extensive range of popular clubs and activities after school further promote pupils' enjoyment of learning.

There are several key features of the high quality care, guidance and support for pupils. All staff know the pupils exceptionally well. Partnerships with the federated school, other schools

and external agencies are outstanding. They have significant benefit for pupils, giving them access to before- and after-school clubs. Parents too benefit by opportunities to become more involved in school, for example through the parent and toddler group. The school has excellent systems to keep track of pupils' achievement. Staff quickly identify any signs of underachievement and intervene with well matched support.

Parents say their children enjoy school very much, behave well, and that the staff are very welcoming. The majority are highly complimentary about the work of the school both before and since federation. Comments typical of many are, 'The ethos of St Cuthbert's has always been a very caring one,' and 'In the last two years the school has gone from strength to strength.'

The school experienced a significant fall in roll and its future appeared uncertain until the decision was taken some two and a half years ago to federate under proven leadership of outstanding quality. As a result of the exceptional commitment of governors and staff, the initiative is a resounding success. Striking features are the beneficial effects of shared expertise through leadership and management, including governance. The work of the senior leadership team in this is exceptional. The best practice in one school, for instance the quality of its intervention strategies, has been successfully introduced into the other, and vice versa, for instance high quality teaching of Spanish for younger pupils. School self-evaluation involves governors and staff very well and leads to the well focused priorities for improvement. Even so, the school has been modest in its judgement of leadership and management. Since the last inspection, the school has made excellent progress, improved the quality of the learning environment in classrooms and outdoors and addressed all the areas for improvement in its last report. It has outstanding capacity to improve and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well from a starting point that is well below expected levels. Attainment at the end of the Reception year varies according to the nature of the year group and is broadly average overall. In some years the majority of children are still working towards expected levels of attainment in the important area of communication, language and literacy, whereas in their physical development the great majority attain the expected goals. Children are well cared for and staff expectations for their progress are high. Children become confident and engage well with their learning. They take responsibility for what they do from an early age, choose activities and enjoy helping. Staff plan the activities together to ensure a lively and full curriculum of good quality. Use of the well resourced outdoor area adds much to children's enjoyment and rapid learning. Staff interact with children exceptionally well and promote their learning through much conversation and questioning. The Foundation Stage is very well managed and organised by a well qualified specialist. The transition into the Nursery and on to Year 1 is well planned and ensures that the curriculum seamlessly meets the needs of all children. The Foundation Stage has benefited from federation through the sharing of expertise and ideas, for example in tracking children's attainment from entry to Nursery into Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of pupils' writing in Key Stages 1 and 2.

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.

Annex A

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
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	2

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?	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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	1
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**

I would like to thank you very much for your help when I inspected your school. I enjoyed my visit very much. Now I would like to share with you my thoughts about your school.

Yours is a good school and has a number of outstanding features, for instance:

- the staff take excellent care of you all and teach you well
- you enjoy school very much and have excellent attitudes to school work
- you make excellent progress in reading and good progress in mathematics
- you have a wide range of activities to enjoy in lessons, in after-school clubs and on exciting residential trips
- staff help very well those of you who find school work difficult
- the senior staff do an excellent job of leading and managing your school.

Part of my job is to make suggestions about how the school can be even better.

- The staff are introducing some very good ways to improve your skills of writing. They need to build on these and help you to achieve higher standards in this important part of your work.

So know your targets, work hard - especially at writing - and carry on enjoying school!

Enjoy the 80th birthday of your school this term!