

St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104667
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	308646
Inspection date	12 October 2007
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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss P Mullin
Headteacher	Mr P Stewart
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2003
School address	Pitt Street Liverpool Merseyside L1 5BY
Telephone number	0151 7092572
Fax number	0151 7078942

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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 the school's provision, leadership and management, attendance and the provision for pupils learning English as an additional language. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, data about past performance, discussions with the chair of governors, senior staff as well as pupils and parents, and a scrutiny of school documents and parent 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 small primary school serves an inner city area of Liverpool. The school roll has risen and the proportion of pupils who come from beyond the immediate area has increased since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is high. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in school is above average. About half of all pupils are of White British origin and the remaining pupils are of Black, Asian, Chinese and mixed race heritage, though only a few are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The school buildings include two double mobile classrooms, which accommodate all four Key Stage 2 classes. The school has gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the National Healthy Schools Award, the Active mark, the Eco Schools Bronze Award and holds the Articled School status to reflect its particular partnership with Liverpool Hope University. It is part of the local learning network and hosts a Pupil Support Centre on site, but this was not part of the inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Leadership and management of the highest quality lead to the excellent outcomes in the pupils' exceptional achievement and exemplary personal development. Very ably led by the leadership team and despite the considerable limitations of the accommodation, staff cater exceptionally well for all pupils. From levels of attainment that are well below average on entry to the Nursery, pupils' progress is very impressive, reaching standards that are well above average in Year 6. The proportion reaching above the expected level in English, mathematics and science is frequently very high. This high level of performance has been sustained over time and is confirmed in the most recent unvalidated test results for Year 6. It is achieved through excellent teaching and highly effective pastoral care.

All groups of pupils, including those from minority ethnic heritages, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those at the early stages of learning English as an additional language, make excellent progress. Pupils themselves understand what they must do to improve and the school encourages them all to aspire to the best. An example of this is how pupils in Year 6 and their parents give considerable thought to which of the several secondary schools in the city they should apply for. Parents hold the school in the highest regard and comment, 'The school is a treasure to the whole area' and 'I wouldn't dream of sending my children to another school... it's just a shame that we haven't a bigger school!'

Pupils behave exceptionally well and develop an excellent awareness of personal safety and how to lead a healthy and fit lifestyle. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils speak enthusiastically about lessons and especially value the visits they make to places of interest where they get hands-on experiences. They take a full part in helping to make the school an enjoyable and safe place to be, for instance through their roles as school councillors, play leaders, buddies and monitors. Levels of attendance are in line with the average of all primary schools and have improved thanks to the good efforts of staff, in particular the secretary and the learning mentor. They help a minority of parents to appreciate the importance of regular attendance and punctuality. The school sets pupils a challenging target for attendance and they understand how essential it is. They develop the essential skills of cooperating with one another and taking responsibility for their learning. In these ways, the school equips pupils well for their next school and later in life.

The care, guidance and support the school provides for pupils are excellent. Staff and pupils have outstanding relationships that foster very positive attitudes to learning. Staff are very well trained and effective in helping vulnerable children during times of stress. Links with specialist agencies and facilities, including the Pupil Support Centre on site, make a very good contribution to the progress that these pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make. The staff have developed excellent procedures to keep track of achievement and use the information very well to set challenging work for all pupils and target those who need additional help.

The quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum is outstanding. Strengths of the teaching include high expectations for what pupils can achieve and excellent deployment of teaching and support staff across all age groups and according to pupils' need. As a result, the pupils learn exceptionally well. The staff are adventurous in how they design the curriculum, which promotes the pupils' learning and enjoyment of school very well. It is based on developing the full range of pupils' skills and its content emerges from both local and international issues,

while maintaining the requirements of the National Curriculum. Business enterprise is encouraged through excellent partnerships in the city and the outcomes of these are clear in how pupils appreciate the connections in what they learn so that activities such as writing have a purpose. French and Spanish are taught and there is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship. There is a wide range of high quality creative activities, supported by specialists attached to the school, as well as events and activities outside lessons to enhance pupils' learning.

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior management team provide excellent leadership. They have not only maintained high standards, but also improved the quality of provision since the last inspection. The self-evaluation of the school is accurate, reflects the findings of the inspections exactly and is based on thorough monitoring. Parents are fulsome in their praise for staff and emphasise the dedication of the headteacher in comments such as, 'He is devoted to the pupils and seems to live at the school.' Governance is outstanding. Governors are highly supportive, have an excellent understanding of the school's performance and challenge the school very well. The school has excellent capacity to maintain its quality and performance. The cost of educating a pupil at the school is above average but because of the excellent outcomes, the school gives outstanding value for money. This is a school which can proudly boast that it achieves its exacting motto: 'Serving with Love, Striving for Excellence.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage is exceptionally well managed. As a result, children make excellent progress. The children are very well cared for and staff expectations for their progress are high, especially in relation to their personal, social and emotional development. They become confident and engage very well with their learning. By the end of Reception, standards are in line with national expectations in most areas of learning. Staff plan the activities together very well to give children a broad and exciting curriculum. They interact with the children very well to promote speaking, listening and imaginative play. Opportunities to observe and assess how well the children are progressing are taken regularly and the information used very well to plan further activities. Both Nursery- and Reception-aged children have good opportunities to use the very well equipped area outside the Nursery. The arrangements for children to join the Nursery are very effective and there are very good opportunities for the children in Year 1 to use resources in the Reception classrooms, which helps them to develop imaginative play.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant aspects for improvement. This outstanding school has an extremely clear view of how it can continue to develop and there are no additional measures necessary beyond those given in the school improvement plan.

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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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	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	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of St Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School, Liverpool, L1 5BY

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 what I found out about your school.

Yours is an outstanding school. Here are just some of the excellent features.

- The staff take excellent care of you all and teach you exceptionally well.
- It is clear that you enjoy school very much and are all becoming mature students who want to do well.
- The children in the Nursery and Reception classes get off to a flying start.
- You are making excellent progress in your school subjects.
- The staff provide you with excellent opportunities to take on responsibilities in school and to enjoy activities at lunchtimes and after school.
- Your headteacher is outstanding. He knows you all so well and, as you know, is happy to be playing in the schoolyard with you every day!

Congratulations to everyone! Please carry on working hard and enjoying school.