

# St Monica's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104905
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sefton
<b>Inspection number</b>	308704
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gill Jones HMI

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	442
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr George Foster
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Paul Kinsella
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 May 2005
<b>School address</b>	Aintree Road Bootle Merseyside L20 9EB
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 5251245
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 5251865

---

<b>Age group</b>	3-11
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 June 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	308704

---

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 two of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: children's achievement; their personal development and well-being; the quality of care, guidance and support; and the effectiveness of the leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from observing lessons, scrutinising school documentation and questionnaires completed by parents, and through discussions with children, parents, governors, staff and the headteacher.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors 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

St Monica's is a much larger than average primary school situated in Bootle, in the borough of Sefton. Children who attend the school are mainly drawn from an area that experiences high levels of social and economic deprivation. A large proportion of children are entitled to a free school meal. The majority of children are of White British heritage. A very small number of children are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average. A very small number of these have a statement of educational needs.

The school has gained a number of awards which include Investors in People, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Activemark. A new junior school building was opened in April 2008. External work was not completed at the time 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

St Monica's RC Primary is an outstanding school. It provides an exceptionally high standard of education and care for children and families in the local Catholic community of St Monica's. The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership. Staff, children and parents know exactly what is expected of them. The staff are committed to the school and are keen to maintain and improve upon the very high standards that are achieved. Staff say 'we do it the St Monica's way', meaning that they strive for excellence in all they do. Children make excellent progress and many reach standards well above those expected nationally for 7 and 11 year olds. Parents appreciate the care, dedication and approachability of the staff and are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.

Children start the Nursery with skills and abilities that are generally much lower than those expected for 3 year olds. After four years in school, many achieve standards well above those expected nationally for 7 year olds in reading, writing and mathematics. A third of the children achieve the highest level, Level 3, in the national end of Year 2 assessments. This represents excellent progress. In Key Stage 2, standards are consistently high and by the time children leave the school at age 11, most have reached standards in line with or above those expected nationally in English, mathematics and science. Writing is a particular strength. Over the past three years, the number of children achieving the highest level, Level 5, in the national, end of Key Stage 2 tests has been well above the national average. This is because all staff have an excellent understanding of what needs to be taught and there is consistency throughout the school in marking and assessing children's work. Children's exercise books and the well presented work on the walls demonstrate that the high standards achieved in previous years are being maintained.

Children's attitudes to learning are outstanding. Their ability to concentrate in lessons, coupled with consistently good or better teaching, enables them to make excellent progress academically and in their personal development and well-being. Children enjoy school. There is a strong sense of pride in belonging to St Monica's and they appreciate the opportunities school offers. They know about healthy lifestyles, but not all children who have packed lunches make healthy choices at lunchtime. The effective school council is active in fundraising for charities locally and internationally. Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities feel well supported and are given equal opportunity to succeed in all aspects of school life.

The curriculum is rich, broad and balanced. An appropriate focus is placed on learning the basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Children are provided with relevant opportunities to practise these skills in other areas of the curriculum. For example, the closure of a local post office led to children debating the issues caused by the closure and expressing their views by writing which set out arguments against closure. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities. These include a residential visit to widen the children's experience of geography and to develop their social skills by helping each other to complete a series of physical challenges. Links have been made with a school in China. Some children are preparing for a visit by Chinese children on an exchange to St Monica's by learning to speak and write in Mandarin. Displays inform children about the Chinese culture and children can explain some of the differences between life in Bootle and Chongqing, the home town of the Chinese children.

The quality of care, guidance and support provided is outstanding. All aspects of safeguarding children's well-being and health and safety meet current requirements. Relationships are

excellent. Parents say how well staff look after and care for their children. The school has an effective behaviour policy which children say is fair and leads to their excellent behaviour. The provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those identified as gifted and talented is exceptionally well led and managed. Children who find learning the basic skills difficult are identified early and given individual support by well-trained teaching assistants. This high quality support is built upon effectively by class teachers and leads to excellent progress for these children. Guidance given to children in lessons and through target setting is excellent. All children have individual targets. They know how to achieve them because teachers explain the work set in lessons clearly and ensure it meets children's individual needs.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The senior leadership team has a clear understanding of what the school does well and what it needs to improve. This is captured effectively by the headteacher in the school improvement plan which is shared with all members of the school community. School policies are adhered to by all staff and there is consistency in classroom practice. Subject leaders are effective. They set challenging targets for children and make good use of available data. However, they do not yet observe others teaching in their subject; this is an aspect the school has already identified as a development point, and peer observations are programmed to begin later this year. The school provides excellent opportunities for family learning so that parents can support their children in school. It is a community of learning. An example of this is in the large proportion of staff who initially joined the school as helpers, taking advantage of the excellent training opportunities the school provides, to become highly committed and effective staff. Partnerships with other schools, universities and children's services are used effectively to enhance the provision for children. Governance is excellent. The high expectations in the school are shared by governors who believe that 'only the very best is good enough for the children in St Monica's'.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

The Foundation Stage, (Nursery and Reception) is very well led and managed. Children enter the Foundation Stage with knowledge, skills and abilities that are generally well below those found nationally. In particular, children's skills in language and literacy are less well developed than in other areas of learning. The Foundation Stage curriculum is adapted well to ensure that every opportunity is taken to extend children's vocabulary. Story telling is used effectively by highly skilled staff to capture the children's interest and excitement. Children in Reception were excited by making cakes for 'The tiger who came to tea' and they retold the story confidently in their play theatre. There is a strong emphasis on reading, through play activities in the classroom and by children taking reading books home. Most children have developed good early reading and writing skills by the time they leave Reception.

Parents say their children are very happy at school. Good arrangements for induction are in place, which include a home visit. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress. School keeps accurate individual records of progress. These are used effectively between Reception and Year 1 to identify any areas of learning where children may need additional help. Children in Reception do not have access to a secure outdoor learning area and as a result, independent learning skills and opportunities to learn through play are less well developed. The school has identified this as a priority for improvement and has good quality plans to tackle this as part of their building work.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Implement the plans to provide a secure outdoor learning area in the Foundation Stage so that children can learn independently across all aspects of the Foundation Stage curriculum.

**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](http://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?	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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

You may remember that a short while ago that Mr Hoban and I visited your school to carry out an inspection. Thank you to those of you who talked to us and for sharing your views about your school. This letter is to explain what we found.

We judged your school to be outstanding. You make excellent progress in all aspects of your learning, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. The work in your exercise books and on the walls is excellent. Your headteacher, the staff and the governors have very high expectations of you and they are proud of your achievements.

Your behaviour is second to none! You concentrate superbly well in lessons and are polite and courteous around the school. You told us that you enjoy school and your parents say that you are proud to attend St Monica's. We can see why. Your teachers and teaching assistants provide you with excellent opportunities to achieve your best. You told us that you find lessons interesting and that your teachers explain the work clearly. You are confident that your teachers listen to any worries you may have and will provide help. You know about keeping fit and healthy, but not all of you make healthy choices at lunchtime! You enjoy the extra-curricular activities, especially the sport and the residential visit to Grasmere. The work of the school council is impressive, particularly the fundraising for local and world charities. You are excited about welcoming the children from China who will soon be visiting your school. Some of you told us you are already practising your writing in Mandarin!

Your headteacher and other school leaders know exactly how to make your school even better. The new Key Stage 2 building that you moved into in April is evidence of their excellent work. Mr Kinsella's next big project is to provide a suitable outdoor learning area for the children in Nursery and Reception. This will help the very youngest children to learn better through their play.

Thank you for making us so welcome at St Monica's. Keep up your excellent attitudes to work; it is good to see you trying so hard to achieve your best. I wish you all the very best for the future.