

St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105091
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	308763
Inspection dates	4–5 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Eithne Proffitt

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	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lynn Ireland
Headteacher	Mrs Stevenson
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2003
School address	Park Grove Birkenhead Merseyside CH41 2TD
Telephone number	0151 6478404
Fax number	0151 6477348

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a school of average size. The majority of its pupils live in the centre of Birkenhead, an area of social and economic challenge. A very high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals and the percentage of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above national averages. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, although the numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups and with English as an additional language are increasing. The school is developing close links with the local children's centre situated on-site and has recently been awarded 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

This is a good school. It provides high standards of care and an effective education, which enables pupils to make good progress and grow in confidence and self-esteem. The school is well thought of in the local community and has strong partnerships with other schools and agencies. Its calm atmosphere and emphasis on pupils' personal and emotional development ensure the pupils have positive attitudes to learning and that relationships throughout the school are highly productive. As a result, pupils enjoy school, get on well with each other and make good progress in their learning. Parents overwhelmingly support the school. A typical view is that, 'It does everything in its power to make sure the children are well cared for and given the education every child deserves.'

The school community have together come through a most distressing period in recent years. The appointment of the current headteacher has influenced strongly the ethos of the school and she has brought an infectious commitment to school improvement and change. The senior management team is forward-thinking, reflective and honest in its evaluation processes and has a strong appetite for growth and change. With the good support of consultants of the local authority, the headteacher has assisted all staff and governors in their work. This has brought about some rapid improvements, effectively demonstrating the school's good capacity to improve further.

Children start school with knowledge and skills well below those expected of their age. Nonetheless, they achieve well in the Foundation Stage and have a good start to their school life. This is because teaching focuses strongly on developing the children's social skills and the clear emphasis on learning through play. This approach continues through Year 1 and helps pupils to build successfully on their previous learning so by the end of Year 2, the good progress of these pupils is assured. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make good progress overall and standards in English and mathematics are broadly average. Standards in science are not as high and continue to be a relative weakness with pupils making satisfactory progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are identified quickly and the support they receive is effective.

The quality of teaching and learning are good overall, and consistent monitoring by the headteacher has assured that focused areas are scrutinised regularly. Initiatives set in place such as clearly defined and explained expectations of pupils in lessons and more probing questioning techniques are already showing a positive impact. However, progress in learning is sometimes not quite as effective because teachers do not consistently set individual targets for pupils to achieve. In addition, marking and feedback of pupils' work do not always give clear pointers for improvement.

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the needs of the pupils. A good range of educational visits and visitors and a keen involvement in sporting activities have a positive impact on pupils' learning. The pastoral care and support are the driving force of the school and make a crucial contribution to the positive attitudes that the pupils demonstrate, although their academic guidance is not as well developed.

The quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher provide an energetic lead in the drive to move the school forward. Areas for improvement have been clearly identified and prioritised. Middle managers have begun to take action to improve the provision in their subject areas but systems for checking and improving pupils' achievement

are not yet fully in place. Governance is strong and challenging and is having a positive influence on school improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When the children start Nursery, their skills are typically well below those expected of children of their age, especially in language, communication and personal and social development. With encouragement, the children settle securely into the class routines and make good use of the wide range of activities presented to them. Staff have high expectations of the children and in a caring, family environment, patiently teach the required social skills. The children's progress in this aspect of learning is a strength of the provision and literally lays the foundations for their future learning. Children with little or no spoken English are well cared for by a bi-lingual assistant. She supports their language development and ensures that progress for these children, not just in literacy, can be acknowledged and celebrated. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Along with the determined lead of the headteacher, staff now have a more accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the provision. Rapid and effective steps have been taken to improve the children's learning experiences. By the time children join Year 1, they have made good progress and their levels of skills and understanding are just below those expected. The good practice in Nursery and Reception now weaves seamlessly through into Year 1, ensuring that teaching and learning effectively meet all the children's needs. Provision for outdoor learning has been restricted by the nature of the school site. The outdoor space is used to extend children's experiences but the school has further plans to assure the children's full entitlement to the outdoor curriculum.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in science.
- Improve the use of individual targets and the consistency of marking and feedback for pupils, so that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to next to improve further.
- Develop the role of subject coordinators to enable them to take a more active role in improving achievement and standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good throughout the school. By the time pupils start Year 1 most are working below the expected levels for their age. By the end of Year 2, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is good. Achievement is good in Key Stage 2 and standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average in English and mathematics. At present not enough attention is given to developing pupils' problem-solving and investigative skills in science and this is holding back their progress. School data shows that currently the additional support provided by the school through small group work is having a positive impact on pupil progress, which is improving. Pupils with additional learning needs are identified early on and the school provides well-targeted individual or group support that ensures their good progress. Trained teaching assistants and specific bi-lingual support successfully promote the confidence, self-esteem and good levels of achievement of the growing number of pupils with English as an additional language.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and reflects the mission statement of the school. Relationships with adults and other pupils are firmly based on respect for all. Pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong and behave well in and out of lessons. Pupils welcome opportunities to make a contribution to the work of the school, for example, through the school council and the peer mediators. These contribute well to the development of pupils' decision-making and negotiating skills. Parents are pleased that their children thoroughly enjoy coming to school. Whilst attendance is below the national average, it is a rising picture. The school, with the support of the home-school development worker and the local authority, maintains a close overview, calling parents and pupils to task regarding absence and lateness at the earliest opportunity. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is increasing and the school works hard to ensure that all pupils are prepared for life in our culturally diverse society. 'The school organises a range of activities to raise pupils' awareness of the cultural and ethnic communities in our area,' is the positive comment of some parents. Pupils are safety-conscious from an early age and understand the importance of eating healthily and exercising. The school has a very strong history of sporting achievement of which the pupils are understandably proud. The school has recently been awarded the Activemark in recognition of their strength in this field. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology satisfactorily prepare them for the next stages in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Caring relationships generate positive attitudes to learning. Lessons are well-planned with a clear focus on what the children need to learn. The best teaching is characterised by good class organisation, effective management of pupils' behaviour well-paced teaching and stimulating and interesting activities. These are all carefully matched to pupils' needs and focused questioning is used well to probe pupils' understanding. Here, teachers are secure in their knowledge of what pupils can do and what they need to learn next and are successful in using technology to engage and motivate pupils. In addition, there are good opportunities for younger pupils to talk to their friends about their work, supporting each other in their learning. Teaching assistants provide an additional layer of teaching, especially in supporting pupils who find learning difficult. This extra help ensures that these pupils make the most of their lessons and make similar progress to that of their peers. There are, however, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Sometimes, introductory sessions are too long, leading to pupils' attention wandering, concentration to wane and there being insufficient time to complete activities and consolidate learning. Although there are some good examples of marking to check the extent to which pupils have understood the lesson, it often fails to show them exactly how to improve their work and, consequently, does not sufficiently move their learning on.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school accurately judges its curriculum as satisfactory. It promotes pupils' basic skills and meets statutory requirements. The personal, social and health education programme is successful in raising pupils' self-esteem and helps them to stay healthy and safe. Pupils are enthusiastic

about the provision for physical education and the after-school sports clubs, proudly talking about the school's achievement of the Activemark. A high emphasis is placed in the timetable on literacy and numeracy, and other subjects are given satisfactory attention. In science not enough attention is given to developing pupils' problem-solving and investigative skills which would increase the level of challenge for the pupils and bring their skills up to scratch. Innovative developments in the curriculum in the use of cross-curricular themes are at present underdeveloped. As a result, there are missed opportunities in making the pupil's learning more interesting and relevant. Pupils' basic skills in information and communication technology are promoted satisfactorily but are not effectively used as a tool to raise standards in all subjects. Work in the classroom is enhanced through a good range of educational visits and visitors. These have a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment and achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Teachers know their pupils well and work closely with parents to ensure that the level of pastoral support is good. Pupils love coming to school. 'It's a great place to be', typifies the views of many. They say that they feel safe, like their teachers and would happily go to any one of them if they had any concerns. Child protection arrangements are in place and health and safety checks and risk assessments are carried out. Links with outside agencies are well developed and arrangements for supporting any vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well organised. Good induction procedures help the youngest children to quickly settle into school. Secure transition arrangements to the high schools ensure that pupils make a smooth transfer into the next phases of their education. Academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory. Pupils are set short term targets that clearly indicate the next steps in their learning so that they know exactly what it is they need to do to progress further. Marking is inconsistent across the school and fails to give pupils pointers to help them understand how they can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide a new and committed leadership. With the support of the local authority they have pinpointed areas of relative weakness and ensured leaders and managers at all levels and all teaching staff are fully aware of what needs to be done to bring about improvement. There is clear guidance about how the school should do this. Action has been taken but the full impact of this is yet to be seen in pupil's standards and achievements. Self-evaluation is much improved. All staff and governors are fully involved in identifying strategies that they feel will bring about improvement. Middle managers are now taking increasing responsibility for their subjects but they are not yet effective in using rigorous checks to drive learning forward. School development planning successfully identifies key priorities and is firmly linked to performance management but the full impact of this on improving provision and pupils' progress has yet to be realised. The school is now setting more challenging targets to raise standards and this is currently being supported by the effective management of extra staffing. The headteacher has the overwhelming support of parents as they feel she is maintaining the supportive nature of the school. The school runs smoothly and financial management is good. Governors have an informed understanding of the school's

needs and a vision and commitment to improvement. They fulfil their role of critical friend well and confidently challenge the school to explain its actions.

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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?	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?	2
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 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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you all for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and are very grateful to all of you who chatted to us - I know you are proud to be part of St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School. We found your school to be a good school because of your headteacher, teachers and helpers but most of all, because of you!

Here are some of the good things about your school that we noticed.

- You are very polite, friendly and obviously enjoy coming to school.
- Your behaviour is good and you get on really well with your teachers and your friends.
- You feel safe in school and your teachers, teaching assistants and all your other helpers look after you well.
- You try hard in lessons, especially if you are asked to work in pairs or groups.
- You are particularly good sportsmen and women!
- Your school gives you lots of activities outside the classrooms, through visits and visitors, that help you learn in a really fun way.
- Your headteacher is really keen to make your school an even better place to be.

There are some things that can be done to help you in your work, so I have asked all your teachers to:

- make sure that you get better in science
- check more carefully the progress that you are making in all your work and to talk to you about it. To set you clear targets for improvement and to make really sure that you know how well you are doing, how you can improve your work and what your next steps are for learning are.

I have also asked those teachers who look after subjects to look carefully at what they can do to make your learning and skills even better.

Thank you once again for being so kind and friendly, we really enjoyed seeing you at work and play!