

Emmaus Church of England and Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131105
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	315719
Inspection date	28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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	485
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Cotterill
Headteacher	Mr A Williams
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Fir Tree Drive South Croxteth Liverpool Merseyside L12 0JE
Telephone number	0151 2331414
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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: pupils' overall achievement and standards; standards on entry to the Foundation Stage and on entry to Year 1; pupils' personal development; the quality of the care and support; effectiveness of academic guidance and the contribution the school makes to community cohesion. Evidence was gathered from: national published assessment data; the school's self-evaluation, assessment records, policies, minutes and other documentation; observation of the school at work; discussions with members of staff, pupils, the chair of governors and a group of parents; the questionnaires returned by parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This popular, oversubscribed school is much larger than average and takes pupils from a wide range of social backgrounds. It was the first school in the country to be a joint Church of England and Catholic Primary school. The proportion of pupils claiming a free school meal is below average, as is the percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school population is predominantly White British. Around 4% are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with pupils of Chinese origin being the largest single group. A tiny proportion is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.

The school has attained many awards. These include a Centre of Excellence for teaching French, National Healthy School Award, Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Silver Artsmark and the Activemark award. The current headteacher has only been in post since January 2008.

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 which provides pupils with a highly effective education and gives excellent value for money. Children enter the school with skills below those typical for their age. They are taught so well throughout the school that they attain well above average or exceptionally high standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave Year 6. Pupils are very confident, concerned young citizens, prepared to assume responsibilities and to play a full part in the school and wider community. Because the care and support pupils receive is so good, they feel safe and are happy to approach adults if they have a problem or are upset. Overall, their academic guidance is good. It is particularly effective in helping pupils to overcome learning difficulties and in boosting pupils' performance in Year 6. However, pupils are not always set clear enough targets in class for their next steps in learning. Underpinning pupils' outstanding performance and provision is the high quality of leadership, management and governance.

Pupils report that they love the school and their parents concur with this view. Comments such as, 'If the school opened at the weekend we wouldn't see him at all', and, 'This is a wonderful positive environment for our children', reflect most parents' views. When members of the school council were asked to sum up what they thought of the school, a response was, 'It is welcoming and warm and is a safe and secure environment.' This not only demonstrates how positively pupils view the school but illustrates how articulate many older pupils become as a result of the many opportunities they have to speak more formally in front of an audience. An example of pupils' excellent contribution to school decision making and of how valued their opinions are, is their involvement in the recent appointment of the headteacher. Some older school council members devised and asked searching questions of the candidates during the selection process.

The school's excellent curriculum provides pupils with rich and varied experiences. As a result, they develop wide interests, a love of learning and a respect for knowledge.

Parents enthuse about the interesting topics their children study each term and appreciate the information provided by the school about these. This gives parents an opportunity to complement pupils' learning within the family and to act as very effective partners with the school in their children's learning. Parents' keenness to support their children was very well exemplified when so many attended an assembly in which Year 5 pupils reflected in dramatic and musical form, their current project about space. This occasion and a subsequent excellent Year 5 lesson in the information and communication technology suite (ICT), demonstrated how far the school has come in its use of ICT to support pupils' learning since the last inspection.

Over the last four years, pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 have either attained well above average or exceptionally high standards in national assessments and tests. This has been achieved as a result of excellent teaching. Consistently, teachers and pupils get on extremely well together and these high quality relationships result in lessons being positive and productive. Pupils learn very well because teachers and support assistants maintain a brisk pace and expect pupils always to do their best. They are rewarded by pupils working diligently and having very positive attitudes to lessons. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils take great pride in presenting their work neatly and they are well organised. Pupils talk enthusiastically about 'teachers using technical things to make learning fun' and, 'we have a very good education because we are taught so well'. Throughout the school pupils also very much enjoy and appreciate the opportunity to

learn French and to have the chance to practise speaking the language during the Year 6 residential visit to France.

Underpinning the extremely positive ethos is the rare, joint denominational nature of the school, which is both Anglican and Catholic. Parents and governors are convinced that this has proved to be a catalyst for greater community cohesion and 'regardless of faith, all pupils and families are united in what they want for the school and the community'. The school has strong links with local services which contribute significantly to pupils' understanding of an active and healthy lifestyle and how to stay safe. Other links promote very well pupils' involvement in the arts and this is reflected in the Artsmark award.

The new headteacher has sensibly taken stock, acknowledged the school's many strengths but has already made his mark. This is particularly evident in the closer links being forged with parents through a weekly newsletter and as a result of his regular presence in the playground before and after school. Parents expressed great pleasure about these innovations in questionnaires and in discussion with the inspector. Other senior leaders and middle managers play a significant part in maintaining the high standards and driving further improvement.

Governance is excellent. The highly effective chair of governors leads an impressively involved and challenging team. Many governors bring specific expertise to areas such as finance and the curriculum. The governing body illustrated its potency in tendering for, designing and project managing the recent extension to the school's excellent accommodation. Leaders and managers are very accurate in their evaluation of the school's performance. Plans for further improvement are well defined and perceptive. There is no doubt that the school has an excellent capacity to continue its outstanding provision.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The children have a super start to their education in the Nursery. Many enter this class with skills below those typical for their age in their ability to speak and listen, in their personal and social skills and in their mathematical understanding. Because children are very well taught and have lots of exciting activities within a stimulating environment, they flourish in all areas of their learning. Children soon settle following their effective induction arrangements, which are much appreciated by parents. Children quickly follow routines, play independently and cooperatively and share and respect equipment.

Children continue to make excellent progress in the Reception unit where the opportunities abound for them to role play, for example, as members of the emergency services, both indoors and in the very well resourced outside areas. Teachers and support staff focus especially on improving children's speaking skills by asking questions and prompting children in order to improve their vocabulary. For the more able, effective teaching promotes their writing skills well. All staff regularly make notes about children's attainment and development. They use these very well to plan the next steps in individual children's learning. The provision for both Nursery and Reception children is extremely well managed. Excellent teaching and a rich curriculum result in children achieving very well. As a result, they enter Year 1 having achieved or exceeded the goals set for them in all areas of their learning. Children's physical development and their knowledge and understanding of the world are the strongest aspects. They make the most progress in their mathematical development and in their personal and social skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- In lessons, sharpen the setting of targets in order to help pupils be more aware of how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve their work further.

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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	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

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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you so much for making the day I spent with you recently so enjoyable. Wherever I went I was greeted warmly and politely.

I was most impressed with your outstanding school. I can understand that you were unable to think of anything that could be better when I asked you. I was very impressed with your excellent behaviour, how good your attendance is and the really lovely way you all get on so well together. I agree with those of you who told me that your teachers help you to learn really well and also make learning fun. It is also very clear how much you enjoy going on visits, having visitors and the opportunities you have to learn French, go to France and play musical instruments.

Another thing that is special about your school is the way that it helps your families and other people living in the area to come closer together. Your new headteacher and the other adults who run the school have a very good understanding of how well the school is doing, but they are not satisfied with that. They have improvements they still want to make. To help them I have asked them to make sure that all of you are set targets in class that will help you know how well you are doing and what you need to aim for next in your work.

Well done and keep working and playing hard.