

St Christopher's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133615
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	316168
Inspection dates	19–20 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Derek Aitken

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	356
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Fran Stoddart
Headteacher	Mr Peter Price
Date of previous school inspection	2 June 2003
School address	Tarbock Road Liverpool L24 0SN
Telephone number	0151 4862835
Fax number	0151 4480778

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large popular school serves an area characterised by considerable economic and social disadvantage to the south of the city. This is reflected in the high proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has, in the last two years, taken part in the local authority's Intensified Support Programme (ISP) for literacy and numeracy. The school holds the Active Mark Gold, the Arts Mark Gold and the Intermediate International Schools Award.

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 and the overwhelming majority of parents and carers agree. As one parent commented 'My child gets up every morning and tells me he loves school. The extra-curricular activities are excellent in building confidence and helping children achieve. You know you can always see staff after school and they are there for you.'

The far-sighted systems for supporting pupils' personal development are excellent. They offer a vast range of opportunities for pupils to develop their talents to the full and see their achievements valued, for example through accreditation by the Children's University modules. Pupils reach high standards in several sporting activities, including cricket. They strongly support the healthy eating initiatives. Staff work successfully to extend pupils' experiences through innovative approaches, such as the teaching of mathematics in Spanish. Pupils' welfare is also of high quality. This results in an outstanding level of pastoral care. Staff know their roles well, perform them consistently to a high standard and ensure that pupils feel very secure and nurtured. Pupils play their part by readily cooperating with adults and behaving responsibly to each other. Consequently, pupils very much enjoy school.

On entry to Nursery, standards are much lower than typically expected of three-year-olds. When pupils leave school at Year 6, standards are average because pupils achieve well throughout school. Their progress is closely tracked, although the use of individual targets to support pupils' learning is not consistent. Well considered programmes enable those pupils who find learning difficult to improve their basic skills. The effective use of the curriculum has been equally successful in raising standards for lower and middle-attaining pupils, although progress in writing has been less marked. The school has yet to focus more fully on the needs of higher-attaining pupils. Staff have successfully adopted innovative learning techniques to enhance the range of their teaching approaches. These are proving very effective in encouraging high standards of behaviour and hard work on the part of the pupils.

The school benefits from a highly committed staff who are skilfully led by the reflective and forward-looking senior leaders. Leadership and management are good at most levels. The majority of the arrangements to monitor the performance of the school are detailed, rigorous and effectively focused on securing future improvement although those for monitoring teaching and learning, through lesson observations, are less well developed. The school works very effectively with a range of partners, including the local learning network and schools at home and abroad, to develop the quality of education it provides. It has made substantial improvements in nearly all aspects of its work since the previous inspection and has good capacity to tackle successfully its few areas of weakness. In the last year a shortage of governors has reduced the effectiveness of the governing body. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage provides a good education for the young children. On entry to Nursery, children's skills and knowledge are well below the level expected nationally for three-year-olds. The children make good progress in all areas of learning because good teaching and the very effective curriculum keep them well engaged in their learning. None the less, standards are below those typically expected of children when they leave the Reception class. Role play is well designed to develop creativity and support decision-making skills. Good behaviour and

positive attitudes are emphasised and are reflected in children's polite and friendly relationships with others, including adults. Children develop the confidence to 'have a go' and are increasingly able to speak articulately and listen attentively. Detailed records of children's progress enable lessons to be successfully planned using up-to-date assessment information. Welfare arrangements are appropriately prioritised and children are provided with nutritious snacks. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well. The school is currently engaged in remodelling the accommodation and developing the use of the outdoor area to enhance the quality of children's education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing.
- Raise the achievement of higher-attaining pupils.
- Ensure consistency in the quality of assessment and individual target-setting to support pupils' learning.
- Ensure that appropriate committees of the governing body are re-established to enable governors to support and challenge the work of the school more effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. By the time they join Year 1, most are working towards the nationally expected early learning goals, but weaknesses remain in literacy and mathematical development. Thereafter, pupils build well on their earlier attainment and targets are met. Pupils attain slightly below average standards by the end of Year 2 and broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Standards have risen steadily in both key stages, especially in Key Stage 2, over the last five years. Progress in science is especially good, as recent work to improve pupils' investigative skills has been very effective. Weaknesses remain in writing in both key stages. At Key Stage 2 too few pupils attain highly in English and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. This is due to very effective tracking and successful intervention programmes, for example in reading, and good support from teaching assistants. Managers are in the early stages of introducing similar rigour to systems to provide a further boost to the achievement of the higher-attaining pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, and this is evident in their hard work in class and their strong participation in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. They have a real sense of their own worth, reflected in their growing self-esteem and maturity and underpinned by the praise they receive for their efforts. Pupils have a very well developed understanding for the needs of others. This is shown in the friendly way they relate to classmates and staff, their exceptional openness and politeness to visitors and their excellent behaviour. Pupils contribute to a number of charities and support Fair Trade initiatives. Pupils are very aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles and the importance of keeping safe. The school council plays a useful role and had an important say in the current playground developments. Good opportunities for older pupils to take responsibility and show initiative as playground monitors and reading buddies, combined with rising standards in basic skills, ensure that pupils are well prepared to meet the challenges of later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils learn quickly because staff manage them exceptionally well and make good use of a wide range of techniques and routines, such as 'Wake and Shake', to engage their attention, and promote excellent relationships and cooperation. Tasks are explained very clearly so that pupils settle quickly. They work hard and well with each other and the enthusiastic teachers ensure that a brisk pace is maintained. Questioning is usually good, but sometimes opportunities are missed to extend the thinking skills of higher-attaining pupils. Similarly, although lessons are planned to meet the needs of all pupils, some of the tasks for the more able pupils lack sufficient challenge. Classroom assistants provide a good level of support in helping those pupils who need extra assistance.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of learning experiences and enables them to achieve highly in their personal development and to do well academically. Strong emphases on physical education and cultural themes, especially in the enrichment programme, offer pupils many opportunities to develop their skills and talents. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and is flexible in meeting the needs of most pupils well. Targeted pupils benefit from well planned and modified reading programmes. Strategies to support higher attainers, including gifted and talented pupils, are less developed. Teachers have used the ISP well to raise standards of literacy and numeracy generally, but its impact on writing has been less pronounced. The school is at an early stage in establishing productive links across subjects to help pupils make meaningful connections in their learning and enhance problem-solving skills. Information and communication technology is used well to support learning, especially in the Foundation Stage.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The welfare of pupils is paramount for staff and is reflected in the highly successful outcomes for pupils' well-being. Numerous avenues are provided for pupils to develop a wide variety of skills to raise their aspirations and reward them for their achievements. Levels of support from staff are high both in quality and quantity and this ensures that pupils feel very safe, nurtured and happy in school. Relationships are excellent, adults 'go the extra mile' to help the pupils. This proactive, consistent approach provides pupils with a well ordered environment in which they thrive. Learning mentors provide very effective support and have been influential in securing improvements in attendance. Other systems to ensure that health and safety are well managed and arrangements for child protection, including the safe recruitment of staff, meet current government guidelines. Pupils' academic progress is promoted by good tracking systems and, in the case of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, underpinned by carefully evaluated support programmes. Transition arrangements to support pupils at all stages of their learning are effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The very clear strategic focus, experience and good judgement of senior leaders are key factors in securing a good standard of education for pupils. Leadership roles are thoughtfully and extensively distributed to ensure that all staff make an important contribution and international links are actively fostered to share good practice in teaching methods. Consequently, staff are well motivated and enthusiastic with high expectations of pupils. The school has good monitoring systems in nearly all areas of its work, which are reflected in the consistent approaches taken by staff and their success in enabling most pupils to exceed their targets. Managers at all levels correctly identify writing and the attainment of higher-attaining pupils as relative weaknesses. The school development plan is focused on these key priorities but lacks the precise criteria against which progress can be measured. Resources are used well to raise standards and, in particular, to support pupils' personal development and welfare. Although some governors have a good overview of the work of the school, recent difficulties in ensuring that committees are able to make decisions have reduced the governing body's capacity to support the school's work fully.

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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?	1
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?	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	2
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?	2
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	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	3
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 Christopher's Catholic Primary School, Liverpool, L24 0SN

My colleagues and I visited your school recently to find out how well you are learning. Thank you for making us welcome - your enjoyment of school was plain for all of us to see. We appreciated your friendliness and excellent manners.

Your school gives you a good education. You have lots of opportunities to develop your skills and talents. All this helps you to become more confident and develop exceptionally well both personally and socially. We agree with you that the staff look after you very well. They know each of you as individuals and this helps you all to get along really well with each other. Your teachers ensure that your learning is interesting. They keep you busy in lessons and this helps you make good progress. As you say 'learning is always fun'. All the staff show you how important good teamwork is. They work very hard on your behalf and are always looking for new ways to widen your experiences and make things even better for you. The new playground is a good example of this.

When we asked you how the school could be improved you could not see how it could be bettered. We found four things. First, to make sure that your writing improves so that you reach higher standards in English. You can play your part in this by not forgetting to apply the handwriting rules you already know! Second, to ensure that those of you who learn very quickly have challenging tasks to make you think really hard. Third, to make better use of assessment and individual targets to support every pupil's learning and finally for governors to continue to do their best for the school.