

St Anne's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105088
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	318392
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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 of pupils on the school roll	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Louise Evans
Headteacher	Mrs Rachel Crisp
Date of previous school inspection	11 July 2007
School address	Highfield South Rock Ferry Birkenhead CH42 4NE
Telephone number	0151 6453682
Fax number	0151 6450137
Email address	schooloffice@stannes.wirral.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Nine lessons were observed and eight teachers seen. Meetings were held with parents, groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at national assessment data and the school's assessments, governors' minutes, school policies, previous reports and samples of pupils' work. Inspectors scrutinised 67 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and a similar number of pupils' questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' attainment in mathematics and writing at both key stages
- whether teaching promotes sufficient progress for all pupils
- the effectiveness of leaders' strategies to bring about improvement
- what the school does to improve the attendance of pupils who are most frequently absent.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized school. The vast majority of pupils are White British. There are a few pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion known to be eligible for free schools meal is double the national average. A very high proportion has special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status and Activemark for its promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The headteacher's single-minded determination to bring about improvement, and dedicated support from governors and staff, have had an immense impact on key areas of the school's work. Consequently, this has progressed from a satisfactory to a good school.

Children's learning and development gets off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Their starting points are generally below expectations for their age when they enter Nursery, particularly in areas of communication, language and literacy, and social skills. There has been notable improvement in all aspects of leadership and provision since the last inspection. The good progress children make, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development, ensures that they are well prepared for their next stages of learning.

Consistently good and, at times, outstanding teaching throughout the school means that good progress continues. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language are also supported well and some make rapid progress. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is average. Current assessments indicate significant improvement in Year 6 standards. Despite making good progress from earlier starting points, the school recognises that standards at the end of Year 2 are too low, especially in writing and mathematics and for the more able pupils. This is because the impact of stronger provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has not yet worked its way through the whole of Key Stage 1. The curriculum increasingly develops pupils' skills by providing new ways for them to learn, and, consequently, pupils enjoy school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Incisive monitoring and evaluation involving all staff, and shared accountability, have steered the school through a period of significant improvement since the last inspection. Through rigorous monitoring and accurate self-evaluation leaders have improved the quality of teaching and learning by embedding effective systems for assessment. Governors support the school strongly and have successfully raised its profile within the local community. Support from parents and carers is very strong. There has been less success, however, in establishing productive links with community groups beyond local boundaries. Nevertheless, its many positive developments show that the school has good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1, by ensuring that the more able pupils are always provided with sufficient challenge.

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- Improve the promotion of community cohesion by increasing links for pupils to communicate with, and learn from, different communities beyond their local area.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils behave well in lessons and work hard because it is expected of them. They rise to the challenges provided and are keen to learn. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities they have to work with partners or in groups, especially when drama is introduced into lessons. The consensus of pupils' views is that, 'lessons are good fun' and that they feel confident about their learning and progress and achieve well.

Progress has gathered pace due to improved assessment systems which, by enabling challenging targets to be set and progress checked regularly, have boosted the pace of learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also benefit from regular reviews of their progress so they too learn at a good pace. Teachers are quick to identify pupils' particular needs and to call upon the wide range of additional support available. Standards at the end of Year 2 are below the national average and the school recognises a priority for improvement is to ensure that more pupils reach the higher Level 3 in writing and numeracy. There was an anticipated dip in standards at the end of Year 6 in 2009 due to the high proportion of pupils within the group with additional learning needs. Current school assessments, supported by unvalidated test results, as well as pupils' work, indicate rapid improvement. Pupils are on track to reach above average standards in English and average standards in mathematics and science.

Pupils think deeply about their behaviour and the impact that their actions might have on others. Their strong sense of what is right or wrong is rooted in the school's Christian values and is a guiding force in their attitudes to school and personal relationships. They are firm in their opposition to bullying and racism. Through the curriculum they learn about the religions, arts and festivals of many cultures, including their own, but their experiences fall short of first-hand contact with different groups in contrasting situations outside of their local area. Pupils adopt sensible approaches to healthy lifestyles. They know that moderation and right choices are the key to a healthy diet and that regular exercise is equally important. Pupils contribute well to the life of the school. The active school council ensures that all have a say. Pupils take care of the fabric of the school and although they have some ideas for making it better they are proud to play their part. The way in which pupils acquire literacy and numeracy skills, combined with their good insights into the world of work and average attendance is good preparation for their future economic well-being

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers know their pupils well and use their accurate assessments to plan effectively. They set a lively pace in lessons, losing no time in reinforcing what has been done earlier before moving on to new learning. Resources, including the electronic whiteboards, are well chosen and used to make tasks more interesting. Teachers enliven lessons by using different methods to engage pupils such as 'talking partners', role play and short group tasks using individual whiteboards to record ideas. Pupils are also encouraged to assess their own learning and decide for themselves what they need to learn next. Highly effective use of different methods was seen in a literacy lesson in which Year 1 pupils were so 'incensed' by the teachers 'boring' sentences that they were motivated to use words such as 'incredible' to describe the animals they had seen at the safari park and make their sentences more interesting than their teacher's. Teachers clearly explain what they want pupils to learn so pupils always know precisely what is expected of them. Very effective marking also ensures that pupils know how to improve. Teaching assistants provide good support as crucial members of the teaching team. Their sensitive management of pupils and skilled interventions make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. On a small number of occasions teaching assistants are not involved sufficiently during the first part of the lesson. Occasionally, teachers do not use questioning effectively as a strategy to keep all pupils on their toes.

The curriculum is tailored to pupils' different needs and interests and enables them to achieve well. There is a good emphasis on developing literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across a range of subjects. Some writing in topic books is impressive. A new approach to planning is increasing

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opportunities for pupils to use their skills more creatively but this is still at a relatively early stage. Learning is enhanced through partnerships, for example, with the high school and local football club, who provide tuition in the arts, sports and literacy and numeracy projects. A good selection of after-school clubs provides further opportunities for pupils to develop skills and interests. Provision for pupils' personal health and social education is well established and enables them to make informed choices about their safety and well-being.

Pupils endorse parents' and carers' overwhelming and accurate view that they are well cared for in school. They appreciate the welcoming ethos of the school and are confident that well organised support is there when needed. The most vulnerable pupils are very well supported and this has noticeable impact on their achievement.

Home-school support work has successfully reduced persistent absenteeism in the past year and brought attendance more closely in line with the schools target. The school continues to work with a very small minority of families in order to build further on the broadly average, but rising, attendance level. Parents are happy with the information they receive from school as well as the help provided for those starting or transferring to the next phase.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Energetic leadership from the headteacher has harnessed the commitment and enthusiasm of all staff. Expectations are high and there is strong determination to continue to improve. Senior leaders model best practice and effectively monitor, evaluate and support the work of the school, providing a clear and accurate picture of its progress. Governors support and challenge the school in equal measure. They hold the school to account over standards and quality and visit regularly to gauge how well the school provides for its pupils. They are ambitious for all of the pupils and ensure that equality of opportunity is central to the school's work so that each pupil receives the support needed to achieve their personal best in an atmosphere that is free from all forms of discrimination. Safeguarding procedures are robust and recommended good practice is swiftly adopted to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. Whilst pupils benefit from good links with the church and other local community groups, the promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The school itself is a very harmonious community but there is little evidence of work done to reach communities beyond its own locality.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall, children's skills are below those which are typical for their age when they start in the Nursery class. Some start with very low language and personal skills. Good leadership and well managed provision for their learning and development ensures their good progress. Most are now working securely within their early learning goals by the end of Reception in all areas of learning. There is a particularly strong focus on personal and social development, with the result that children quickly gain confidence, behave well and become very enthusiastic learners. Numeracy skills are taught well. In one session children used their fingers to learn to double numbers up to five then practised further by doubling the spots on ladybirds' wings. Good teaching of letters and sounds helps children to tackle early reading and writing confidently. There are ample opportunities for children to learn through exploration and play in the excellent outdoor area as well as in the classroom. The recently installed 'tyre park' provides really exciting physical challenge whilst other outside areas were equipped to encourage children's imaginations as construction workers, pop stars or World Cup soccer heroes. Provision for children's welfare is good. Staff are watchful over the well-being of children in their care. Careful observation provides vital assessment information on which the next challenges are planned. There is good support for parents who seek to be more involved in their children's development. Teachers realise that more work is needed to encourage some parents to arrive punctually with their children so that they do not miss the important social time at the beginning of the day.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires expressed overwhelming support for the school. Typical comments praised the leadership of the headteacher and the improvements which have taken place. Others are pleased with their children's progress and the support they receive. The inspection team agrees with these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Anne's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 196 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	73	17	25	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	84	10	15	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	49	73	18	27	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	66	21	31	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	49	73	17	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	67	22	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	67	22	33	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	45	67	18	27	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	66	22	33	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	64	21	31	1	1	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	64	23	34	0	0	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	52	78	14	21	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	51	76	14	21	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



7 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Anne's Catholic Primary School, Birkenhead, CH42 4NE

Thank you for making my colleagues and I feel so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. It was a real pleasure to talk to you about your school because you are so polite, well mannered and sensible. We looked at your work and found it to be neat and tidy. You obviously take pride in what you do. We were also pleased to find out that your attendance is improving steadily. Well done! That is very important so we hope you will keep it up.

I am pleased to be able to tell you that you go to a good school and that you play your part in that well. You all work hard and make good progress. The standards you reach by the end of Year 6 are improving and overall are in line with those reached by pupils across the country. We think they could be higher at the end of Year 2. You told me that your lessons are good fun and I agree with you. Your teachers work hard to help you learn well. All of the grown-ups in school take good care of you so that you are safe and achieve as well as you can.

Your parents, teachers and school governors are just as proud of St Anne's as you are and want it to be even better. I am sure you want that too. In order to make that happen I have asked your headteacher and teachers to do two things. The first is to help pupils to reach higher standards in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Second, that all of you have more chances to learn from the ways different groups of people live in the United Kingdom and other countries in the world.

Best wishes to all of you.

Yours sincerely

Mr Kevin Johnson

Lead inspector

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