

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104459
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	324052
Inspection date	5 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Hewlett

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	233
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Johnson
Headteacher	Mr H Boyle
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ward Street Prescot Merseyside L34 6JJ
Telephone number	0151 477 8220
Fax number	0151 477 8221

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	5 November 2008
Inspection number	324052

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: 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 Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the standards and achievement of pupils; the quality of pupils' personal development and well-being; the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the effectiveness of the leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, plans for further improvement, nationally published assessment data and the school's own records of progress over time. Discussions were held with staff, pupils, parents and governors. Questionnaires returned by the parents were considered. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This average sized school lies between Liverpool and St Helens in an area of mixed housing. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below average. Few pupils are of minority ethnic heritage. Children join the part-time Nursery before proceeding into Reception. The school holds many awards including the Basic Skills Quality Mark, National Healthy Schools Award and Artsmark.

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 it provides good value for money. Good leadership has ensured the school has made strong improvement since the last inspection. As a result, some aspects of the school's work are now outstanding. These include pupils' personal development and the care, guidance and support they receive.

Concerted efforts to raise standards are ensuring pupils make good progress, and their achievement is good. Children start school with levels of development which are broadly typical for their ages and abilities. Progress is good in the EYFS and by the time children move into Year 1 the majority are reaching the expected level in their learning goals. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1, where standards by the end of Year 2 are broadly average. However, their rate of progress picks up markedly in Key Stage 2 where they achieve well. Year 6 pupils leave very well prepared for secondary school, exceeding their challenging targets with standards that are well above average. Unvalidated 2008 national test data and inspection evidence confirms that these exceptionally high standards have been maintained. However, against this very positive picture, work undertaken to increase the number of pupils reaching the higher levels in writing in both key stages has yet to fully impact. There are also some inconsistencies in the teaching between the classes in Key Stage 1 which results in some pupils making slower progress than in other parts of the school.

Teaching is good overall. Rigorous monitoring has identified the weaknesses in pupils' writing and actions have been taken to put things right. For example, the school-wide focus on improving writing has ensured boys and girls are developing as confident writers. As a result of the best teaching, pupils know how to grab the reader's attention in their writing and compose interesting poems and stories. Teachers expect the pupils to do well and tailor their teaching to help pupils reach their targets. They track closely each pupil's progress, investigate why progress might have fallen short of the expected target and decide how best to support them. Effective teamwork between teachers and support assistants ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in reaching their targets. When the teaching is satisfactory the pace of the learning is slower and worksheet based activities do not provide enough challenge for some of the more able pupils.

The school's success can be seen by its popularity in the local community and the warm way the school welcomes all pupils. An overwhelming majority of parents speak very highly of the school with typical comments such as: 'We are delighted with the school, staff are friendly and approachable' and 'My son loves school, his needs are recognised and supported so that he has the room to flourish in a caring school community.'

Pupils come to school with a smile. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. They want to be at school and have an exceptional enjoyment of their learning because, as pupils say, 'There is a good, happy vibe and the teachers are always ready to help us.' As a result attendance levels are above average, community spirit is very strong and relationships are excellent at all levels. This is partly because of the many opportunities for pupils of different ages to work and play together, as in the play-leader scheme that operates at lunchtime. The good curriculum and impressive range of enrichment activities, including visits, adds significantly to pupils' levels of confidence, self-esteem and enjoyment. Pupils have a very good understanding of cultures and faiths different from their own and recognise the importance of having respect and tolerance for everyone. Older pupils set an impressive example

to the younger ones in their politeness, impeccable behaviour and honest opinions. Pupils are willing learners and eager participants in activities indoors and out. They enjoy playing sports and dancing and know very well how to keep fit and healthy.

The outstanding level of care and concern for all pupils' welfare is evident throughout the school. Safeguarding requirements are met and the school is very successful at promoting equality as well as eliminating discrimination. It knows its community very well and is highly effective in promoting community cohesion. Pupils say they feel safe: they are very clear who to go to when they have a concern and are keen to help others 'so they are not on their own'. The school's excellent links with outside agencies ensure that individual pupils' needs can be met.

The staff's commitment, energy and determination to provide the best education possible are shared by an effective governing body. Together, they accurately judge the school's strengths and weaknesses in most areas. Through the leadership's effective self-evaluation, there is a clear, shared vision about what needs to be done to ensure continued improvement as well as the ability to carry it through. The success of previous initiatives also shows that there is a good capacity to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The EYFS ensures children get a good start to their education. Many start Nursery with skills and knowledge similar to those expected for their age. A rigorous assessment of children's abilities on entry to Nursery has recently been established to ensure their learning needs are known and met. Having made good progress in the EYFS, children move into Year 1 as developing readers, writers and young mathematicians. In the EYFS they make outstanding personal development because of the exceptionally supportive, warm relationships between adults and children. Parents remarked on how well their children have settled in. Children are happy, at ease and know their routines well. They are excited by the activities they are involved in and are keen to share their ideas and experiences with their classmates. This was very clearly seen as they all sat very still, waiting for their turn at group time to describe what they most enjoyed. The staff know each child well. Regular observations, focused teaching sessions and discussions as a team ensure that all the adults are aware of the children's individual needs. Consequently, children learn and develop well. Experiences are tailored to ensure that the children move on in their learning, particularly in their knowledge of letters, sounds and number. The children take part in a wide range of interesting activities indoor and out over the year. The teacher leads the EYFS well and is constantly looking to ways to improve the provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the rate of progress pupils make in Key Stage 1.
- Ensure more pupils reach the higher levels in writing.

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.

Annex A

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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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 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

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	2
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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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	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 for your warm welcome when we inspected your school. We really enjoyed our day and appreciated the friendly smiles that you gave us! I can see why you enjoy school so much as there are so many interesting things happening. Your parents and school council members told us that your school is one of the best, with good leadership, well mannered people, good lessons and teachers that help you learn well. We agree.

Our Lady's is a good school and we also agree with your headteacher that some things are outstanding, such as the care, guidance and support the school gives you. Your behaviour is also excellent and we were very impressed to see you getting on so well together at the various clubs you attend.

When you are in Nursery and Reception you get off to a really good start and teachers in all the classes organise interesting activities for you to take part in. You really are good models of how to stay fit and be healthy with all that exercise, dancing and fruit eating.

Since the last inspection almost three years ago, the school has continued to improve. By the end of Year 6 pupils achieve well and the standards they reach are often much higher than expected for their age. We were pleased to see that Year 6 pupils are again aiming to reach such high standards. We can see why you and the staff are so proud of your school.

To help your school to be even better and to help you to do the very best you can, I have asked your headteacher, the governors and staff to make sure that:

- more of you reach the higher levels in your writing
- you make faster progress in your learning when you are in Key Stage 1.

You can help by continuing to work hard and trying to get a 100% attendance certificate.