

St Brigid's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104474
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	324057
Inspection dates	8–9 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Eithne Proffitt

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	180
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	Sharon McGrail
Headteacher	Mrs G Price
Date of previous school inspection	23 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Waterpark Drive Stockbridge Village Liverpool Merseyside L28 7RE
Telephone number	0151 4778150
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Brigid's Catholic Primary is a school of average size. The majority of its pupils live locally in an area of considerable social and economic challenge. A very high proportion are eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and of the few from minority ethnic backgrounds, none require additional support with speaking or understanding English. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Children come to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Reception class from a range of different local Nursery settings.

The school has a range of awards in recognition of promoting pupils' basic skills, in the arts, in sport and in information and communication technology (ICT). It has also gained the Healthy Schools Award and International Schools Status.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Brigid's Catholic Primary is a good school with some outstanding features. The school knows its general strengths and areas for development, and takes exceptional care of its pupils. As a result, pupils develop outstanding personal skills and achieve well in Years 1 to 6.

Children enter Reception with knowledge and skills that are well below those expected for their age, but the care provided by the school, supported through strong links with parents, ensures that each child's first taste of school is a familiar and settling time. The school judges the progress made across the EYFS to be good. However, inspectors have identified insecure assessments and too formal provision as relative shortcomings leading to children's progress being no better than satisfactory.

Pupils' progress across Key Stage 1 is good and helped by some excellent teaching and reliable assessments. Most pupils reach standards that are generally in line with national averages. However, the percentage of pupils achieving higher levels is lower than expected. Standards by the end of Key Stage 2 took a considerable dip in 2007. Provisional results for 2008 indicate that more pupils have reached the expected standard but some of the more able pupils did not reach their potential. Current progress across the school is good overall, but there are some variations across year groups. Better achievement takes place where teachers know their pupils well, regularly assess their learning and provide activities that will challenge them all. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the particularly good help they receive with their learning.

The school gathers a range of information about each pupil's performance in different subjects and the degree to which pupils acquire essential skills. However, this information is not gathered frequently enough to give subject leaders a timely accurate picture of how well pupils, including the more able, are progressing towards set targets.

The outstanding level of pastoral care and the mutually supportive partnerships that exist with parents and the local community help to ensure that all pupils are well looked after. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly well supported. Parents regard the school highly, confident that their children are in safe hands. 'The school creates a friendly, caring and safe learning environment,' typifies the views of many parents. Pupils are treated as individuals and their welfare is paramount. The vast majority of pupils are well behaved, courteous and cooperative learners. Teachers, ably supported by the learning mentor, competently manage the behaviour of the small minority who behave immaturely and consequently their behaviour is improving. Pupils have an informed appreciation of the importance of healthy and safe lifestyle choices and understand very well how to keep out of harm's way. They care about each other, their school, their community and the world in which they live. These factors contribute significantly to pupils' outstanding personal development. Attendance at school remains just below the national average, but the school uses every available source of support and has introduced a raft of initiatives to help improve it. There is evidence of improvement this term and this is testament to the hard work of the whole school community.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and ranges between satisfactory and outstanding. Where teaching is best, teachers capture pupils' interests and encourage them to be active, effective learners. In some lessons, however, teachers do not always challenge the more able pupils and this leads to them sometimes not making the progress of which they are capable.

While the school judges the curriculum provided for pupils to be outstanding, inspectors judge it to be good. The provision for higher attaining pupils in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is not firmly focused on meeting their individual needs. Learning opportunities for other subjects are focused on the development of pupils' skills, which are taught through the International Primary Curriculum (IPC). This is a very recent initiative. While it is effective in complementing pupils' personal development, its impact on improving the more able pupils' academic progress is not yet evident.

The quality of leadership and management is good. Senior managers provide an energetic lead in the drive to move the school forward. Some of the areas for improvement have been identified and prioritised. Middle managers have begun to take action to improve the provision in their subject areas, but the systems for checking and improving pupils' achievement are not robust enough to ensure that no pupil slips through the net. Governance is good and governors' increased understanding of their roles and responsibilities since the last inspection has ensured that they are involved in school improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

When they enter Reception, children's language, communication, personal and social skills are below those typically expected for their age. The curriculum currently provided for the children is still developing. As a result of staffing issues, the implementation of the new EYFS curriculum has been delayed. However, the school's management has acted and sought the expertise of local authority consultants to provide valuable training to help accelerate its implementation. This high quality input has been invaluable in helping adults to carry out careful assessments of children's development, to promote more individualised learning and to successfully meet welfare requirements. These improvements enable children to make satisfactory progress through Reception. However, currently, opportunities for children to extend or direct their own learning, both indoors and outdoors, are not planned to assure the children's full entitlement to a rich and varied curriculum. They enter Year 1 with improved personal and social skills, but with still some ground to make up in their learning in communication, language and literacy.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision and assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Raise standards for more able pupils.
- Increase the frequency of the checks made on pupils' performance to ensure that subject leaders have a more accurate picture of pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most pupils achieve well. They make good progress through Key Stage 1 and recent assessments at the end of Year 2 show that most pupils reach standards that are broadly average. However, the number of pupils reaching the higher levels was less than in 2007 in reading and mathematics. In Key Stage 2, progress continues to be good for most pupils and the 2008 provisional national test results show a marked recovery from the dip in 2007. However, while most pupils reached the expected level in English, mathematics and science, the percentage attaining the higher level was well below that normally achieved nationally. Currently, leaders check on pupils' performance annually and use this information to plan appropriate support and intervention. This does not allow for subject leaders to identify, target and swiftly support any pupils,

especially the more able, who may not be fulfilling their potential during the course of the academic year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Effectively promoting pupils' personal development and well-being is at the core of the school's work. Its success in achieving this contributes overwhelmingly to pupils' confidence, self-esteem and their overall good achievement. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding. It very successfully promotes community cohesion and prepares pupils well for the realities and challenges of life in our culturally diverse society. 'We are like a tube of Smarties – all different on the outside but all the same on the inside!' was the enthusiastic response from a group of pupils. Pupils' excellent spiritual development is evident in a number of settings, for example in a lesson where the qualities of awe, wonder and regard for each other's achievements was tangible. From an early age, pupils are aware of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe. They willingly take on responsibilities. The members of the school council speak with pride about their work for the school, the local community and the needy in other parts of the world. In lessons, even the very youngest pupils are beginning to show skills of perseverance, persistence and collaboration, preparing them well for their future. Involvement in the Comenius Project and the award of International School Status contribute extremely well to pupils' knowledge of the global community. Attendance is satisfactory overall, but figures show that it has improved so far this year.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Where the teaching is strong, teachers successfully capture pupils' interest, they promote well pupils' eagerness to learn and appropriately match tasks to pupils' needs. Pupils benefit from crystal clear explanations, a quick-fire pace and active teaching methods. Teachers ask well targeted, challenging questions which prompt pupils to think hard and stretch themselves to the limit.

In less successful lessons, teachers have insufficiently high expectations of the more able pupils. This results in teachers setting activities that do not challenge these pupils fully and consequently pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Teaching assistants play an active role in lessons, providing high quality, well planned support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This contributes well to the good progress these pupils make. Teachers are becoming more proficient in assessing pupils' levels of attainment. However, analysis of these outcomes in the core subjects is not carried out frequently enough to enable teachers to ensure that all pupils are consistently making good progress. Teachers provide pupils with good quality marking and feedback that, as many pupils stated, 'lets us know how well we are doing and what we need to think about next'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum, including the core subjects and the recent introduction of the IPC, is successful in meeting most pupils' academic needs and in promoting pupils' outstanding personal development. The school places an appropriate emphasis on developing and extending pupils'

basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are taught French, adding effectively to their cultural development and to the international dimension of their learning. Within this enriched curriculum, however, there are limited opportunities for the most able pupils to work independently or, for example, to direct or assess their own learning. Pupils clearly enjoy the new IPC and speak enthusiastically about their learning. An outstanding feature of the curriculum is the notable range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities provided for pupils. These include sports, the performing arts and involvement in the community. This emphasis on extending pupils' interests and talents has been rewarded through the many awards received by the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is a real strength of the school and underpins all its work. All adults know the pupils and their families very well. Pupils say they feel safe and happy in school, expressing high levels of trust in the adults who care for them and the support systems provided. Pupils and their parents know there is always someone to whom they can take their worries, most notably the learning and parent mentors. The school has the overwhelming support of its parents. They take considerable pride in their children's personal achievements. 'I think as a result of my child attending St. Brigid's, she has now got a place at university,' was one of a range of supportive parental comments. Induction procedures for pupils starting school are strong, supportive and family-friendly. The smooth and well managed transition to secondary school ensures that older pupils look forward with confidence to their transfer. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and risk assessments ensure the safety of all who work and learn in the school and beyond. Pupils take responsibility for caring for each other. The school council and buddies provide mutual support systems for all age groups. Academic guidance procedures are clear for all pupils. Although current tracking systems require more regular input and analysis, particularly by subject leaders, even the youngest pupils know their current targets well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders and managers are firmly focused on promoting the well-being and care of the pupils. All adults actively promote a highly caring ethos. Leaders have invested heavily in human resources, ensuring that pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, have access to high quality support and are generally enabled to make good progress. Systems to track pupils' progress are in place and reviewed annually to target intervention for those pupils who may find learning more difficult. The processes that leaders and managers have set in place to address the areas for improvement in the EYFS have been affected by staffing changes and therefore have not impacted rapidly enough on children's progress.

Leaders' and managers' contributions to community cohesion are outstanding. The school opens its doors to embrace, support and serve the needs of its users and provides a safe harbour for pupils and their families. Parents' overwhelming support further impacts on the school's reputation within and beyond the local community. Leaders and managers at all levels have been particularly successful in promoting the school positively. They have established firm links and partnerships locally and internationally. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. Given the proven strengths of the school's leadership and

management at all levels and the improvements made since the last inspection, there is a good capacity to improve 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?	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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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/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	3
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	2
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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of St Brigid's Catholic Primary School, Liverpool, L28 7RE

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you all for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school. Thank you to all of you who chatted to us. I know how proud you are to be part of St Brigid's. You go to a good school.

These are some of the good things we found out:

- you are very polite and friendly and are making a real effort to come to school every day
- you feel safe in school, and your teachers, teaching assistants and all the other helpers look after you extremely well
- your mums, dads and families really appreciate everything your school does for you
- you behave well and you get on really well with your teachers and your friends; you try hard in lessons, especially if you are asked to work in pairs or groups
- you make good progress in Years 1 to 6
- your school gives you lots of things to do outside the classrooms, through visits and visitors, that help you learn in a really fun way.

There are some things that can help your school to be even better, so I have asked your headteacher to:

- make sure that the Reception class is a really exciting place for the little ones to learn
- make sure that all of you, especially those who find learning easier, are set the sort of work that will challenge you all to do your very best
- check more often on the progress that you are making so that those teachers in charge of subjects know exactly how well you are all doing all of the time.

You too can help by coming to school every day and by being the very best that you can be. Thank you once again for being so kind and friendly. I really enjoyed seeing you at work and play.