

St Silas Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104615
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	324078
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Philip Martin

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 controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	164
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 J Doran
Headteacher	Mr Johnathan Nicholls
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	High Park Street Liverpool Merseyside L8 3TP
Telephone number	0151 7276067
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Silas Church of England Primary School is smaller than average and serves an area of severe disadvantage within Toxteth. Most pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The majority speak English as an additional language. The main first languages are Somali and Arabic. Numbers on roll have fallen since the last inspection. A higher than average proportion of pupils start and leave the school other than at the usual times. Some of these pupils have little or no previous education. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. A Reception class provides for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average. Many pupils have other barriers to their learning. The school has the Healthy Schools Award, Eco-Schools Status, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Inclusion Charter Mark. The deputy headteacher has been acting headteacher since October 2008 following the secondment of the permanent headteacher to another school.

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 with outstanding features. It has improved significantly since the previous inspection because of the drive, enthusiasm and commitment of all staff. There is good capacity to improve further. Leadership and management are good. Since the last inspection the headteacher and senior leadership team have put several effective strategies in place. The acting headteacher is continuing to drive new initiatives forward, with a positive impact on the school's overall effectiveness. The school provides an excellent level of care and support for all, including many with severe personal difficulties. Staff strive tirelessly to provide a safe, secure and nurturing environment. At the same time, they never forget their key aim of creating a successful learning community. The school works with parents and local groups to raise and meet aspirations and to help them to realise the importance of academic as well as personal success. A typical parental comment is, 'St Silas is a good school for children from different cultures.' Because of this, pupils achieve well, and standards are improving and now close to national averages.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding because of the care, support and guidance they receive. Pupils become enthusiastic, well-behaved learners who very much enjoy coming to school. They learn strategies that help them to be safe and emotionally, socially and physically healthy. Many bring positive attitudes towards learning to school, and the school successfully builds on these.

The support offered draws on extremely good partnerships with an impressive range of agencies and groups. The school can clearly measure the positive impact of some of these initiatives, for example in improved achievement. However, the school is less effective in measuring the full effect of others, for example those aimed at supporting personal development. The school assesses pupils' academic progress rigorously and knows exactly how well different pupils are doing. It uses this information very well to plan work and support for individuals and groups. The information is used less well to gather data about patterns of achievement of different groups to identify and act on variations in trends of pupils' performance over time.

The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers take a consistent approach to teaching, especially in English and mathematics. This consistency helps to maintain a good, steady rate of progress. Good-quality teaching emphasises the importance of basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Pupils' learning is supported by a good curriculum that has a strong and necessary focus on English and mathematics. The work in pupils' books shows that they are proud of what they do. They take care to make sure it is neat and tidy. However, very few pupils use joined-up handwriting, which means they are unable to write quickly at length, limiting their skills such as note-taking.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well. They start in the Reception class with standards that are much lower than expected at their age, particularly in their personal development and communication and language skills. Through good teaching, a broad and balanced curriculum and very good care and welfare provision children make good progress overall. Progress is very good in personal, social and emotional development, resulting in children who know routines, and play and work

together well. They are enthusiastic and more than ready to learn at the beginning of Year 1 despite having skills and knowledge in other areas that are still well below those expected.

The quality of learning and development is good and based on a curriculum that meets children's needs well. This includes varied activities in the improved outdoor area. There is a good mix of adult-led activities and those initiated by the children themselves. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led well and improvements are being made to the way in which children's progress is measured. As a result, there is a stronger focus on encouraging children to become independent learners.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop ways of evaluating the impact of the full range of initiatives in place.
- Refine the use of assessment data to provide information so that the school can report more easily on the progress of different groups.
- Improve pupils' handwriting.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils at the start of Year 1 have established good learning habits although their skills and knowledge are still much below what might be expected at that age. They make good progress through Key Stage 1 and reach broadly average standards in mathematics by the end of Year 2. Progress in reading and writing is less strong and standards are still well below average. Good progress continues through Key Stage 2. Results in assessment tests at the end of Year 6 have been showing a steady improvement over the three years up until 2008. Assessments at the end of Year 6 at this time indicate below average standards but good progress. Work in pupils' exercise books and discussions with the pupils themselves show that the previous improvement in standards is set to continue and that pupils are on course to attain broadly average levels by the end of Year 6. However, very few pupils use joined-up handwriting and this limits their skills in writing quickly at length. The school works very hard to help pupils to overcome their learning difficulties and/or disabilities and other barriers to their learning. Challenging targets are set and school leaders use these very well. Consequently, all groups of pupils make good progress. This includes pupils from the whole range of ethnic groups, including Somali, Yemeni and Black British pupils. White British pupils also achieve well, as do boys, girls and pupils for whom English is an additional language. Pupils who move in and out of school at other than the usual times also make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Harmonious relationships are evident in classrooms and the playground. Pupils build up an extremely secure understanding of the range of cultures they meet, including that of this country. Their attitudes to work and school are exemplary and a major influence on their good progress. Behaviour is good overall and any misbehaviour is quickly addressed. Pupils talk about how much they enjoy their work at school and the help they get from teachers. They become keen, interested and engaged learners. Many pupils, supported by the school and other organisations, are overcoming considerable difficulties to do so. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils learn very well how to be physically, socially and emotionally healthy and safe. They happily take on responsibilities and talk about the contribution they make as school councillors or eco-councillors. Pupils are proud

of their work in preventing bullying and racism. They are prepared well for the future. This is because of their ability to work and play together, their outstanding attitudes to learning, their good progress and the satisfactory standards they reach.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well because teaching is good. Some outstanding lessons were seen during the inspection, as well as a very small number that were satisfactory. In a typical good lesson key features are the high quality of relationships between teachers and pupils, and the way pupils themselves work together. This helps to promote interest, engagement and good behaviour. Teachers plan interesting lessons and share with pupils what the pupils are going to learn. Consequently, pupils are clear about what they have to do. Year 6 pupils, for example, were keen to make sure they included the features of a newspaper report as soon as they could in their own report. The pace of lessons is generally brisk and there is a good range of activities that actively involve pupils. Work is closely matched to pupils' abilities and needs. Pupils have a good idea of how well they are learning through good quality marking, particularly in English. They examine each other's work, and this helps them to be critical of their own. However, insufficient attention is given to encouraging effective handwriting skills.

In a few cases, teachers' questioning is not sufficiently sharp and pupils become a little confused about the direction of the lesson. Younger pupils occasionally spend too long listening on the carpet, become a little restless and their attention wanders.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The rich and balanced curriculum is another cornerstone of ensuring pupils' good achievement. A good emphasis on basic skills in literacy and numeracy helps pupils to learn in other subjects. Pupils take the opportunities provided to use these skills in other subjects, including information and communication technology, music and art. The curriculum builds directly on pupils' own experiences and widens out to create new opportunities for learning. The photographs on display, taken by pupils themselves, demonstrate the wide range of activities as well as their enjoyment in learning. Pupils take the chance to join in with the wide range of extra activities offered, including craft clubs, cultural and sporting activities, and clubs designed to foster standards and achievement. This includes weekend and holiday provision. The breakfast and after-school clubs and annual residential trip help to encourage good attendance and social development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

A key strength of the school is the care, guidance and support provided at all levels. All adults know the pupils, their situations and circumstances, their qualities and their barriers to learning very well indeed. Armed with this knowledge and understanding, adults plan and implement the most appropriate strategies to help pupils to achieve personally and in their work. The coordinator of teaching and learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that their programmes for improvement are focused on the right areas and that they have the support needed to achieve them. The work of the learning mentors is invaluable in

supporting pupils with challenging personal circumstances. The 'Quiet Place' offers a refuge and individual care and attention to support pupils' social, emotional and spiritual development. The many support staff, including teachers and teaching assistants, are very effective in working with groups and individuals at all levels of ability and different needs to aid their progress. Their work in supporting the acquisition of reading skills has been nationally recognised. Pupils feel safe from bullying and racism in school. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet current government requirements. The school is doing all it can to promote good attendance and this is reflected in attendance rates that, although broadly average, are better than the rates of most similar schools. Teachers assess progress rigorously and use the information well to ensure that all pupils work towards challenging targets. This information is analysed carefully in terms of what individuals can do and where support is needed. Teachers ensure that pupils know their targets for improvement and pupils understand them and are meeting them to help pupils to achieve well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The acting headteacher is successfully continuing the momentum gained over the last few years. He has a fierce determination to ensure that pupils learn, as well as creating an atmosphere in which all pupils flourish. The school is very successful in ensuring that all have equal opportunities to succeed. This view is being shared and demonstrated by all members of staff and governors. Subject leaders in English, mathematics and science play an important role in the monitoring and evaluation of the work in those subjects. They take a common approach to assessment in each subject and use of these assessments to improve teaching and learning. The school is working well to implement these developments in other subjects. However, the school does not use data effectively in monitoring trends in achievement of different groups. This restricts the school's ability to recognise and act on any variations in trends in performance over time.

Governance is good overall. Governors offer good support and, increasingly, challenge the work of the school with a view to consolidating improvements and setting challenging targets for pupils' achievement. However, governors are not yet as involved as they might be supporting the school's evaluation of its own performance or in constructing its plans for further improvement. As a result, the impact of school initiatives on developing pupils' personal development and well-being are not yet sufficiently evaluated. The school's budget is tightly controlled and supplemented through a range of activities. Funds are used wisely for the benefit of pupils at the school through the provision of good-quality staff, useful resources and beneficial strategies. The school provides good value for money.

Pupils and staff make a good contribution to community cohesion. Work within the communities directly served by the school is exemplary. Some of these groups use the school's facilities for their own work. This has beneficial spin-offs for the parents, their children and the school, for example in the provision of a computer suite. As a result, these communities have the confidence that their children are well looked after. Parents know they will be welcomed by the school and very much appreciate the school's work to involve them. Pupils are developing a good understanding of the wider community. Many bring a knowledge of other countries as a result of their own backgrounds and their journeys to this one. Positive initiatives are in place for pupils to share work and other experiences with pupils in schools in other countries.

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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?	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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
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	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	2
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	2

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	1
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?	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	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 Silas Church of England Primary School, Liverpool, L8 3TP

I would like to thank you for the welcome you gave the team when we inspected your school recently.

What we found is that St Silas is a good school. Indeed, some of the things it does are excellent. One of these is that all the adults look after you very well. We saw that you enjoy all aspects of what you do very much. You are happy at school - we could tell that from the way you worked hard, smiled at your teachers and at Mr Nichols when he greeted you! Because you are looked after so well and enjoy your lessons, you feel safe and comfortable in school. We noticed that you get along with each other very well and know that bullying and racism are wrong. You make good progress. The standards you reach are improving and are about average in English, mathematics and science when you leave school. We do think though that your work would be better if you used joined-up handwriting.

We saw that your teachers help you to learn well and that they make sure you have interesting lessons and other exciting things to do. The school works well with other adults and groups so that your time in school helps you all to achieve well. We also noted that the school should be better at using what it knows about your progress to judge how well different groups are doing. We think that all adults, including school governors, should check the effectiveness of all the changes that the school makes.

You can help by making sure you learn how to write in cursive script (that means joined-up handwriting). You can carry on enjoying school, working hard and getting along with each other in the future, just like you do now.

Wishing you all the best.