

# St Nicholas's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104657
<b>Local Authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	324086
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Derek Aitken

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	172
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Canon Anthony O'Brien
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Anne Edmondson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 May 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Orthes Street Liverpool Merseyside L3 5XF

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 March 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	324086

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This school is below average in size. It serves an inner city area, but some pupils live in other districts of the city. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average and in most years the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. Over half of the pupils are of minority ethnic heritage and more than 20 languages are spoken by pupils. A small percentage of these are at an early stage of learning English. Some pupils are from families of overseas students who are temporarily resident in the city while studying locally. Many more pupils than is usually the case leave or join the school before the end of Year 6. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage through Nursery and Reception classes. The school holds the National Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark Gold and the Eco-Schools Silver Award.

Privately managed extended childcare provision is on site. This was inspected separately and will receive a separate report.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Nicholas's is a good school in which pupils achieve well both academically and in their personal development. Pupils from very diverse backgrounds are well integrated with the life of the school. They relate exceptionally well to each other, feel safe and enjoy school. The school's very effective work to ensure pupils' well-being has been recognised in its awards. Most parents are supportive of the school's work. A small number of concerns were raised in the parents' questionnaires. These included the impact of several recent changes in staffing and leadership roles on pupils' progress. Inspectors judge that the consistently good quality of teaching that pupils receive is the key factor in the school's improvement since its previous inspection. The school accepts that some leadership roles need further development to maximise pupils' achievement.

From well below average starting points in the Nursery, children make good progress, especially in their personal development. Recent changes to the interior accommodation have boosted the quality of provision, but some weaknesses in the outdoor area restrict opportunities to develop children's learning fully. Children's progress is built on well in Key Stage 1. Good teaching provides pupils with a firm foundation for learning, which is capitalised upon in Key Stage 2. The progress pupils make in Key Stage 2, especially in the older years, quickens as they gain steadily in confidence and independence. By the end of Year 6, standards are average in English, mathematics and science and pupils have achieved well. Pupils' enthusiastic response to lively teaching in Spanish helps them to acquire above average levels of fluency in this language. The high proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils at an early stage of learning English make good progress alongside their classmates.

The broad and balanced curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' development. It is focused successfully on promoting pupils' readiness to learn. For some pupils there is a time delay before their speaking and listening skills are transferred into good outcomes in reading and writing. Nonetheless, by the end of Year 6 most pupils' standards in these skills are comparable to those found nationally. Recent curricular innovations, such as theme weeks, have not only boosted pupils' attitudes to, and enjoyment of, learning but also increased their awareness of ecological issues. Teaching is good, with some outstanding features. All groups of pupils receive work appropriate to their requirements and pupils' responsiveness to these challenging opportunities is often exceptional. These two factors underpin pupils' good progress. Care and welfare arrangements to cater for the wide range of pupils' pastoral needs are of good quality, and this promotes pupils' positive attitudes well. Despite the school's efforts, a small but significant number of pupils are persistent absentees. The school's systems for tracking pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science are effective in supporting their learning.

The school benefits from good quality leadership and management. Strength has been added to the team by the acquisition of able, new staff. They have worked hard and successfully to secure marked improvements within a short period of time, for example to the curriculum and the Early Years Foundation Stage. Other leadership roles have only recently been outlined. The school works well with other organisations, for example receiving secondary schools, to ensure that pupils' transfer smoothly into Year 7. Overall, the school has improved well since its previous inspection, has good capacity to improve further and offers good value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children join the Nursery with skills and knowledge that vary widely, in part dependent on the level of children's command of English. Generally, skills are well below those expected for their age, lower in writing and personal development. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in Reception. By the time children join Year 1 their skills are below national expectations and few attain the higher levels. Progress is most marked in children's personal development. In response to the staff's good strategies for promoting self-esteem and cooperative play, all groups of children settle in quickly and behave well. This enables them to develop their speaking and listening skills well, and staff extend these skills effectively through questioning designed to stimulate children's imagination. Teachers are making good use of the new interior accommodation to promote children's learning. Some deficiencies in the outdoor environment and resources restrict opportunities for children to develop their skills fully. Children's achievements are closely tracked, and this information is used very well in Reception to plan focused activities for children. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has a very clear vision for the further development of the setting and has demonstrated her good leadership and management skills by initiating considerable improvements in provision within a short period of time.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage to provide better opportunities for reinforcing and extending children's skills and knowledge.
- Develop leadership roles to help post holders raise standards further and maximise pupils' achievement.
- Improve attendance.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils build well on their earlier attainment as they progress through the school. A very successful focus is placed on developing the speaking and listening skills of all pupils, including new arrivals from abroad, who are at a very early stage of learning English. This factor, and the positive attitudes pupils acquire, enable them to take successful steps in their learning in Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 2, however, the literacy standards reached by pupils remain well below average. Pupils make increasingly good progress through Key Stage 2 and this is accelerated further in Years 5 and 6. Standards by the end of Year 6 are average overall, which represents good achievement for the pupils who have studied continuously in school. Pupils' skills are strongest in mathematics, where they make good use of opportunities to develop problem solving skills. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are carefully addressed by teachers and teaching assistants and this enables them to make the same good progress as their classmates.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils of all religions and nationalities get on exceptionally well with each other. This is a notable strength of the school. Pupils' behaviour is good, and often exemplary, as in Key Stage 2, where they display an

increasing maturity and well-developed sense of independence. Pupils have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and make good use of the playground facilities for active play at break times. They are well aware of how to stay safe and enjoy school a lot. While most pupils attend regularly, and attendance rose a little last year, some pupils are absent too often. Pupils make very effective use of opportunities to contribute to the community through fundraising for charities and in their enthusiastic participation in plays and talent shows. Pupils' good achievement in literacy and numeracy, together with their well-developed collaborative and enterprise skills, set them up well for the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good expectations teachers have for the progress of pupils are fully reflected in the vibrant classroom displays, which support pupils' learning well. Teachers plan interesting lessons which are carefully designed to ensure that all pupils are fully engaged in their learning. Pupils are managed exceptionally well by teachers and their assistants and this fosters pupils' motivation and sustained concentration. Teachers skilfully use a range of strategies to encourage pupils' full participation in their learning. Pupils are very responsive to these creative and imaginative touches. They listen and learn from each other and answer confidently. Teachers strike exactly the right balance in helping pupils to think for themselves and to work out their own answers. Teachers make good use of oral assessment to focus pupils' learning and most of their marking provides pupils with good advice. The pace of learning is usually brisk but on a few occasions this pace flags when time is less well used to extend or reinforce pupils' learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. The necessary and pronounced emphasis on basic skills enables pupils to acquire both the self-confidence and the foundation for the wider range of skills they develop in Key Stage 2. The school has successfully incorporated elements of a Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme to enhance pupils' personal development. Theme weeks, such as 'Going Global', are used thoughtfully to promote pupils' understanding of the wider world and to reinforce the acquisition of skills, for example in geography and information and communication technology. Weekly Spanish lessons for all pupils enhance pupils' enjoyment of learning and boost their self-esteem by enabling some pupils to achieve high levels of proficiency in the language. A wide range of enrichment activities, mainly for pupils in Key Stage 2, promotes pupils' learning well.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Systems to ensure pupils' welfare, and health and safety are good. Child protection arrangements are in place and meet current government guidelines. Various pastoral procedures are very successful in reducing or removing barriers to learning and in promoting highly positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour. These contribute well to pupils' experiences of a well-ordered and secure climate for learning. Older pupils have a good understanding of their academic targets and how to achieve them. Pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science are effectively tracked and used purposefully to direct individual pupils towards specific

programmes to support or boost their learning. These measures help to ensure that the vast majority of pupils meet appropriately challenging targets in Year 6. Some of the formal procedures for supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, such as in relation to their individual education plans, are underdeveloped.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Senior leaders provide clear direction for the work of the school. The headteacher's strong aspirations for pupils' well-being are complemented well by the very able deputy headteacher, who has worked energetically to improve the curriculum. Leaders' successful provision for equal opportunities is clearly reflected in the inclusive ethos of the school and pupils' good achievement and well-being. The warm welcome the school affords to pupils of very varied nationalities and backgrounds makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Most of the school's systems for monitoring the work of the school are secure and this enables the headteacher to have a broadly accurate overview of the school's main strengths and areas for development. A few leaders have too many responsibilities and/or are relatively new to their posts. As a result, they have not yet acquired a comprehensive picture of some areas of the school's work, including teaching and learning. Governors provide a satisfactory level of support and challenge for the school.



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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?	2
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 <sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
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	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

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

My colleague and I really enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for being so kind and helpful. You were absolutely correct when you said that all the children welcome new pupils warmly and get on really well with each other. This was one of the things that impressed us most on our visit. Your school gives you a good education.

Here are the main good things we found out about your school.

- The Nursery and Reception children get off to a good start.
- The staff look after you well. You get on really well with the adults and enjoy your lessons, (including Spanish) and other activities, where you can show off your talents. You behave well and your very good attitudes help you do well in your work.
- You are taught well. Teachers work hard to make your learning interesting and challenging. Because of this you keep up your concentration and are keen to answer the teachers' questions.
- By the end of Year 6 you have made good progress in your learning.

This is what I have asked the headteacher and staff to do now and why.

- Improve the outdoor area for the Nursery and Reception children to help them learn even better.
- Some of your teachers are quite new. They have extra important jobs to help the school run smoothly and to check on your learning to make sure you do your best. They need more opportunities to develop their skills in these areas.
- Some pupils are missing out on the good things the school has to offer by not coming to school often enough and so we have asked the school to improve their attendance. You can help the teachers by encouraging these pupils to come to school more regularly.

We wish you the best of luck for the future.