

St Johns Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132796
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	331060
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Frank Ravey

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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)	345
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 Robert Gittins
Headteacher	Mrs Eileen McBirnie
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Sessions Road Liverpool Merseyside L4 1SR
Telephone number	0151 9221924
Fax number	0151 9330915

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Inspection number	331060

© Crown copyright 2009

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

When St Johns Catholic Primary School was inspected in September 2007, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to provide an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. Subsequently, Ofsted inspectors have made five visits to monitor the school's progress. This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average primary school serves the Roman Catholic Parish of St John the Evangelist in Kirkdale, north Liverpool. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than average, as is the proportion who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. While most pupils are White British, a small but increasing number is from a range of minority ethnic groups. A few of these pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Since its last inspection, the school has moved into newly built accommodation on the same site. There have been several staffing changes during the past two years. The school accommodates a breakfast and after-school club on site. This provision is managed by the local authority. The school is working towards the National Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. It now provides a satisfactory and rapidly improving quality of education for its pupils.

St Johns is a satisfactory and improving school. It has strengths in pupils' good personal development and in the good care, guidance and support it provides for them. It forms good partnerships with other schools and agencies to promote pupils' well-being. The school has made good improvement since its last section 5 inspection. Older pupils put it simply and accurately: 'Our school has improved in almost everything in the last couple of years.'

Pupils start school with skills that are well below the levels expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage but still start Year 1 with standards that are below and sometimes well below average. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall through Key Stage 1 and 2. By the time they leave Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are still significantly below average overall but have recently risen considerably as a result of improvements to teaching and the use of assessment. However, standards in writing remain low, despite recent initiatives aimed at improving them. The more able pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils enjoy school and are eager to learn. They behave well overall and sometimes behaviour in lessons is outstanding. Teaching is improving greatly. It is now satisfactory overall and in some year groups it is good, with evidence of outstanding practice in a few lessons. However, some lessons, although satisfactory, lack the pace and vitality to enthuse pupils to the same extent as the good and outstanding ones. Occasionally, the work provided does not challenge the more able pupils as well as it should. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is now enabling pupils to make satisfactory progress in acquiring basic skills. A good range of activities outside of lessons contributes greatly to pupils' enjoyment of learning. The robust systems for assessing pupils' progress that have been developed since the last inspection are helping teachers have a clear and accurate view of pupils' performance and how it can be improved. This, in turn, is having a positive impact on achievement, which is now satisfactory.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy, and they take advantage of the good range of sporting activities provided to help them do so. They have a good sense of how to stay safe and are confident that adults will be there to help them if needs be. This reflects the good care the school provides for all groups of pupils. Attendance continues to improve and, while still below average, is now satisfactory.

The school's senior leadership has taken significant strides forward since the last inspection. Leadership is now satisfactory and is developing some significant strengths. The extended leadership team works well together and as a result, dependence on the support of the local authority has reduced considerably during the time the school was subject to special measures. Leaders at all levels contribute strongly to the process of improvement. There is a very strong sense of purpose amongst staff. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, enabling leaders to pinpoint the areas that need most attention and focus expertise and resources upon them. As a result, the school has made significant improvements since its last inspection, notably in standards, progress, attendance and the quality of teaching and the curriculum. The governing body is rigorous in holding senior leaders to account for the school's performance. All these factors demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children's skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are well below those typically seen for their age. This is particularly so in relation to their personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. The children achieve satisfactorily overall and make good progress in some aspects of their work, such as their personal, social and emotional development and understanding of letters and sounds. By the end of Reception, however, standards are still below average overall and sometimes well below, with very few children working securely within the learning goals set for them nationally.

The accommodation, both indoors and out, is bright, stimulating and enhanced by a wide range of good quality learning resources. There are rigorous procedures to ensure children's welfare, and staff engender warm and supportive relationships with the children ensuring that they feel safe and cared for. All of this, together with a good balance of adult-directed and child-initiated activities, results in children who are eager to come to school, have very good attitudes to learning and are becoming increasingly confident and independent. There are differences, however, in the quality of teaching and learning in adult-directed and child-initiated activities. Staff are skilled and effective in promoting good learning in directed activities, which include good quality teaching of phonics, mathematical ideas and promoting children's creative and physical skills in music and art activities. This was seen in the impressive large-scale artwork that many children contributed to, developing an awareness of terms, such as shade and texture, and learning how to apply paint with different applicators. Staff are not yet skilled enough, however, in intervening productively in children's self-initiated play to take learning forward at the same good rate.

The assessment of children's learning is continuous and becoming more accurate. Its use is having the greatest impact in supporting the planning of adult-directed activities, which take good account of children's individual needs. Assessment information is not used as well to guide adults' intervention in the activities the children choose for themselves. The Early Years Foundation Stage is being led and managed satisfactorily. There is good awareness of the aspects that need to improve and satisfactory plans to achieve these.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in English, mathematics and science, and particularly in writing.
- Improve the achievement of the more able pupils so that they perform as well as they should.
- Ensure that teaching is at least good in all classes.
- Improve the quality of interactions between adults and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to maximise the opportunities for children to learn through independent activities.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils start Year 1 with standards that are below and sometimes well below average. They make satisfactory progress overall across Key Stage 1 and in some lessons progress is good, thanks to well planned and vibrant teaching. This is leading to a rise in standards at the end of Year

2. Progress is satisfactory overall through Key Stage 2. While standards are still significantly below average by the end of Year 6, this is due mainly to low standards in writing and the limited proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in their national tests in English, mathematics and science. Standards overall are now rising across all year groups as a result of improvements in teaching and assessment. While standards in writing remain stubbornly low, despite the school's efforts to improve them, recent work in pupils' books shows signs that things are getting better. Similarly, the achievement of the more able pupils is improving, as a result of better-planned lessons and a strong focus upon meeting the learning needs of these pupils. However, the school recognises that more needs to be done to ensure these pupils achieve as well as they can. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities now achieve satisfactorily, thanks to emerging strengths in the management of special needs and to the sterling work done in lessons by teaching assistants. The small number of pupils learning English as an additional language also achieve satisfactorily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

When asked about what they do in school to help stay fit and healthy, pupils respond with plenty of examples. These include: regular exercise in physical education twice weekly, eating healthy foods and drinking water and taking part in sporting activities outside lessons. They have a good understanding of the benefits of these activities. Equally good is their understanding of how to stay safe. 'Always tell people where you are going', is just one of the ways they explained this. Pupils get on well together, showing a good level of social skill, for example through their good manners and by the way they work comfortably together in lessons when asked to do so. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school and sometimes it is outstanding, particularly when teaching really fires pupils' imagination and captures their interest. Examples of this were seen particularly in Years 5 and 6 during the inspection. Pupils' cheerful and pleasant attitudes and their willingness to work show how much they enjoy school. The school council is beginning to take a lead role in decision making, enabling pupils to make a satisfactory contribution to the school community. Attendance was an issue at the last inspection but has improved significantly thanks to the school's continuing hard work and is now satisfactory. Rising standards and improving achievement, together with good social skills, mean that pupils are now prepared satisfactorily for their future economic well-being. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, although their understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity is less well developed than other aspects.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching has improved significantly and now has a satisfactory impact overall on learning. Pupils often make good progress in lessons. However, the impact of teaching on progress over longer periods of time, as seen through work in pupils' books and in test results, is satisfactory. Good relationships between staff and pupils form a sound basis for learning. Classrooms are happy, stimulating places in which to work, with teachers making great efforts to provide wall displays that encourage pupils to be inquisitive about learning. A strong feature of lessons is the good support provided by teaching assistants for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, helping these pupils now to make at least satisfactory progress and often to achieve well in lessons. Some outstanding practice is emerging in both key stages. For example, teachers'

planning in Year 2 is of high quality and leads to sharply focused activities that challenge pupils to learn. However, teaching is not yet consistently good across the school, sometimes lacking the flair and challenge that characterises the good lessons and on these occasions, this leads to pupils not getting as much out of their learning as they could. Occasionally, work provided for the more able pupils in mathematics does not stretch them sufficiently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A key factor in the school's improved curriculum has been the appointment of a curriculum manager to have an overview of provision. This ensures that the curriculum now enables pupils to develop basic skills of literacy and numeracy at a satisfactory rate and that their skills, knowledge and understanding develop appropriately as they move up through the year groups. The school is at an early stage in organising the development of these skills through work in other subjects, demonstrating its commitment to making learning both more effective and interesting. Pupils' enjoyment of lessons shows that the curriculum stimulates learning well. The development of information and communication technology is being enhanced by the new state-of-the-art computer and resource area. The curriculum is now tailored appropriately to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This same process is now being applied to meeting the needs of the more able pupils and its impact is starting to become evident in improved achievement for these pupils, although this is still in its early stages. The school continues to enrich the curriculum well through a good range of additional activities that include performing arts, French and a wide range of sports clubs. It also makes good use of links and partnerships to enhance the provision, for example, through partnership with a local performing arts college in a music, dance and drama project that will culminate in a performance with other local primary schools. Within the school itself, pupils in Key Stage 2 are rehearsing eagerly to perform 'Bugsy Malone' towards the end of term!

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel very safe in school and are confident that they receive good care from all members of staff. They know who to turn to if they have a problem and are sure that any issues they raise will be, in their own words, 'sorted out'. The school has acted successfully to improve attendance and this is an indication that the high level of commitment to ensuring pupils enjoy school is paying dividends. Safeguarding procedures meet current government requirements. Good improvements to procedures for supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are resulting in these pupils making better progress. Great care is taken to ensure that pupils from minority ethnic groups are fully integrated with school life and that their contribution to its richness and quality is valued. The school works very well with outside agencies to support pupils' well-being and makes good use of its own staff to engage, support and motivate pupils at risk. Pupils are well informed about how they are doing in their work. Teachers mark work thoroughly and in writing, specifically point out to pupils how they can improve further. However, this is not the case in mathematics, where pupils, particularly the more able, lack guidance on how to reach higher standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The good improvement made since the previous inspection means that school leadership now promotes satisfactory achievement and good personal development for its pupils. The school's senior leadership team has led this improvement purposefully and vigorously. Together with a determined and knowledgeable governing body and the strong support of the local authority it has taken the steps required to ensure pupils receive a satisfactory and improving quality of education. Strategies to check the school's performance are firmly rooted in management practice, resulting in rigorous and accurate self-evaluation. This, in turn, is leading to increasingly well focused actions to secure improvements, involving leaders at all levels. A good example of this is the progress meetings about individual pupils held termly between the headteacher, relevant senior managers and class teachers. The outcomes of these meetings feed back into teachers' planning and classroom practice and are beginning to bear fruit in terms of achievement. The school exceeded its most recent targets for pupils gaining the expected levels in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 but did not meet targets for those achieving higher levels. School leaders and governors recognise that they are still at the start of a long-term process and that much more is yet to be done, but the professional expertise to secure such further improvements is plain to see. The close and rigorous questioning of school leadership by the governing body gives further evidence of this commitment. The school is successful in eliminating discrimination and is strongly committed to promoting equality. However, limitations in the achievement of more able pupils mean that the promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall. Promotion of community cohesion is also satisfactory. The school itself is a harmonious community and it has established strong local links but its promotion of links with diverse and global communities is at an early stage of development.

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?	3
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?	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?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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 Johns Catholic Primary School, Liverpool, L4 1SR

Thank you very much on behalf of the inspectors for being so helpful when we visited your school recently. Of course, you will have become used to seeing inspectors in St Johns over the past year and a half, and especially me, because I have now visited your school five times! You may remember that you have received all these visits as part of the 'special measures' Ofsted said was needed to help your school improve.

Well, the very good news is that your headteacher, school staff, governors and yourselves have all worked so hard and successfully that 'special measures' are no longer needed. A very big 'well done!' for the part you have played in this. You told us yourselves that you can see how much your school has improved over the past two years – and you are right! Your school is now giving you a satisfactory standard of education. Here are some of strengths we discovered.

- You behave well and sometimes your behaviour is outstanding, especially in the best lessons.
- You enjoy school and you are keen to learn.
- You are very proud of your school – and we think that you are a credit to it and to your families.
- Everyone in school takes good care of you and wants the best for you.
- Your headteacher, teachers and governors have a clear understanding of what your school needs to do to improve further and they are doing the right things to make this happen.

To help your school get even better, we are asking your headteacher and teachers to do four really important things.

- Help you reach even higher standards in English, mathematics and science, and especially in writing.
- Help those of you who are quick learners to do as well as you should.
- Make sure all your lessons lead to really good learning.
- Make sure that children in the Nursery and Reception classes learn as much as possible when they are finding things out for themselves.

You can help by continuing to be such well behaved and eager learners. We wish you all the very best for the future.