

St Francis De Sales Catholic Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104651
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	336342
Inspection dates	30 November –1 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Stephen Wall

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	351
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr John Thompson
Headteacher	Miss Clare Suffield
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2006
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Telephone number	0151 5258489
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation, policies, pupils' books, assessment information, pupils' and staff questionnaires and 31 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' progress and achievement in writing and reading
- attendance
- the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average inner city school offering Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) and Key Stage 1 provision. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is well below average.

The school has gained the following awards: the Healthy Schools Award; Basic Skills Quality Mark; Activemark; and Financial Management Standard in Schools.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**2****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

This is a good school. Underpinning its success are the outstanding levels of care, guidance and support it provides for its pupils. Because of this and the school's excellent attention to safeguarding, pupils feel exceptionally safe in the school's nurturing environment. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary because relationships throughout the school are very strong. Pupils enjoy the orderly and supportive atmosphere that permeates the school. They also say that they are enjoying lessons more because 'we are doing more interesting things.' As a result, attendance has improved significantly and is now satisfactory.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well in Reception and Key Stage 1 classes where teaching is consistently good. In the Nursery, progress is slower because too few activities are directed with clear enough purpose by adults. In both the Nursery and Reception, outdoor facilities are not used to best effect to promote children's physical development and their exploration of the world around them. In Reception and Key Stage 1, good teaching coupled with a good curriculum provide a wide range of learning experiences to which pupils respond enthusiastically. As a result, they enjoy learning, make good progress and achieve well to attain standards that are broadly average and rising rapidly.

Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have brought about good improvement to the learning environment. There are good resources to support teaching and learning, especially in information and communications technology (ICT). There has been a strong emphasis on improving the use of assessment and on the professional development of staff. These are helping drive up standards and give a clear sense of purpose to the school's work. Outstanding governance has also played a pivotal role in improving the school's effectiveness. Governors are knowledgeable, supportive and ask the necessary questions to hold the school to account rigorously to make sure of its continued improvement. Pupils are actively involved in the school community and in the local community through connections with the local church, for example. However, leaders and managers accept the need to promote community cohesion further by broadening pupils' appreciation and understanding of national and international aspects of cultures and religions.

Since the school's last inspection there have been significant improvements in achievement, the effective use of assessment and attendance. This record of improvement is the result of rigorous self evaluation and effective action. It illustrates the ambition and drive that leadership provides and the good capacity the school has for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve provision in the Nursery by providing children with more structured activities to promote good quality learning.
- Make sure that the outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is used more effectively.
- Promote community cohesion more effectively by giving pupils more opportunities to explore other religions and cultures.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' excellent behaviour in lessons and their positive attitudes show that they are keen to learn. Pupils enjoy working in groups and pairs when they readily share ideas and learn from each other. They enjoy rising to challenges that teachers set them. Pupils are keen to volunteer to answer questions. Occasionally, the pace of teaching drops, especially when pupils are expected to sit and listen for too long. As a result in a few lessons, pupils' concentration wanes and the rate of their learning slows. Overall, however, pupils make good progress and achieve well. From starting points which are below age related expectations when they join the Early Years Foundation Stage attainment is average by the end of Key Stage 1 and rising, especially in writing and reading. In mathematics, attainment is consistently above average. The effective use of teaching assistants also enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress and achieve well.

Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities in school. The school council is popular and is active in suggesting improvements such as more and better playground equipment. Pupils' good basic skills in literacy and numeracy and in ICT mean that they are well prepared to take advantage of the next stage of their education at primary school. Pupils' good levels of spiritual, moral social and cultural development are apparent in their excellent behaviour, their respect for adults and each other and the harmonious way in which they work and play together. Educational trips broaden their horizons, although their first-hand experience of other cultures and religions is limited.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers prepare their lessons well. The learning goals for each lesson are clearly set out. This gives most lessons a clear focus on learning and progress. Teachers use assessment data adeptly to match tasks closely to the needs and abilities of different groups of learners. Teachers are also becoming increasingly skilled in tracking the progress of pupils towards expected goals and targets. Most teaching is challenging. It is varied and conducted at a good pace to keep pupils interested and on their toes.

The curriculum makes good links between Reception and Year 1 with a planned balance of activities between play and more formal lessons. As a result, pupils move seamlessly from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 with minimal disruption to their learning and progress. Enrichment activities, especially in sports, are popular. Participation rates are high. These activities make a significant contribution to pupils' enjoyment and their adoption of healthy lifestyles.

Strong links have been forged with outside agencies to support pupils with specific needs. Transition arrangements into the Early Years Foundation Stage enable children to settle quickly into the routines of school life. Strong links with the nearby junior school also ensure that pupils settle in quickly and successfully to the demands of Key Stage 2. Pupils describe the school as being like 'a big kind of family'. 'Teachers take really good care of us. I love this school,' reflect the views of older pupils summing how successfully the school takes care of its pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

A new management structure has revitalised management at all levels sharpening the focus on improvement and raising standards, although some middle managers are still feeling their feet in their new responsibilities. Strong teamwork is evident across the school. Evaluation procedures are thorough and give the school an accurate picture of what it does well and where it could do even better. For example, standards in reading and writing are improving rapidly because leaders and managers have placed more emphasis on using phonics and introducing new reading materials with greater appeal to the pupils. Leaders and managers are strongly committed to promoting equality and tackling discrimination. Their success can be seen in the good achievement of all groups of pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Attention to safeguarding is meticulous. All adults working in the school, including governors, demonstrate high levels of understanding of the importance of safeguarding and very good knowledge of the school's comprehensive policies and procedures. The school promotes community cohesion effectively at school level and in the local community where it is highly regarded. However, developing pupils' understanding of national and global community cohesion is at a very early stage of development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2
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Early Years Foundation Stage

While children make good progress in Reception, progress in the Nursery is satisfactory because activities are not sufficiently well thought out to promote good quality learning. In the Nursery, there is too often a lack of focus on activities that will enable children to make swifter progress with a clear role for adults to shape children's learning. In Reception, however, good planning and a clear focus on learning are to the fore. The recently appointed Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator has provided good leadership and management to bring about improvement in Reception. Care, guidance and support for children are strong. Good links have been established with outside agencies to support children who are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, children feel safe in the Early Years Foundation Stage and enjoy the wide range of learning experiences available to them. Children work and play in a stimulating environment, especially in the Reception area. However, the good outdoor resources in both the Nursery and Foundation are not used to the full to develop children's learning. Teaching is good, especially in Reception where adult led activities are especially effective in promoting good progress and achievement. Assessment is used effectively overall to track pupils' progress as they move through the Early Years Foundation Stage.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

A low number of parents returned questionnaires. Of the 31 returned nearly all were supportive of all aspects of the schools work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Francis De Sales Catholic Infant and Nursery School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 31 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 351 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	87	4	13	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	94	2	6	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	20	65	9	29	2	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	71	9	29	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	81	6	19	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	68	7	23	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	77	6	19	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	22	71	7	23	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	71	8	26	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	71	8	26	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	65	10	32	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	87	4	13	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	87	4	13	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



2 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Francis De Sales Catholic Infant and Nursery School, Liverpool, L4 3RX

Thank you for your warm welcome during the recent inspection of your school. Many of you were keen to talk about your school. What you said helped us a lot in reaching our judgements.

You will be pleased to know that you go to a good school. You told us how safe you feel in school and inspectors agree. The adults working with you make your safety their number one priority. It is good to see how well you get on together and with the adults who work with you. Your behaviour is excellent – well done! It is also good to see that attendance is improving. I hope you keep this up because coming regularly to school is so important if you are to do well. It is pleasing to see how well you are doing in mathematics and that your skills in reading and writing are getting better and better. Again, well done!

In order to make your school even better I am asking it to do three things:

- make sure that what you do in the Nursery is more closely guided by your teachers
- make sure that in the Nursery and Reception you make better use of the outdoor areas
- provide you all with more opportunities to learn about life outside your immediate community so that you gain a better understanding of other religions and cultures.

I am confident that you will continue to work hard with your teachers to make sure that your school continues to go from strength to strength in future.

I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Stephen Wall

Lead Inspector

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