

St George's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104925
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	336387
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Crowther
Headteacher	Mr L McKay
Date of previous school inspection	11 September 2006
School address	Dennett Close Maghull Liverpool L31 5PD
Telephone number	0151 5261624
Fax number	0151 2886560
Email address	Head.StGeorgesPrimary@schools.sefton.gov.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 17 lessons or parts of lessons. Inspectors observed eight teachers and held discussions with governors, staff, parents, groups of pupils and the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at school policies, records of meetings, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 107 responses to parents' and carers' questionnaires were received and analysed.

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

- how effectively the school is working to improve standards in writing and to better engage girls in mathematics
- the impact of initiatives aimed at better promoting community cohesion, at national and international levels
- how successfully the school engages with parents and carers to support their children's learning
- the accuracy of assessments of children's progress and attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage and how well the outdoor area is used to promote their learning.

Information about the school

This average size school has gained a number of awards, including the Activemark and achieved Healthy School status. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of educational needs, is below average. Most pupils are White British.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a good quality of education. The determined leadership of the headteacher provides clear direction for the school and his vision for school improvement is shared by all involved with the school. Accurate self-evaluation means that leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Subject leaders carry out their individual responsibilities diligently and are skilled at developing their own subjects. They are less skilled at working collaboratively to promote whole-school improvement. Target-setting, related to pupils' progress and attainment, is realistic and challenging and is based on good quality data. As a result, leaders have been successful in making and sustaining improvements and the capacity for further improvement is good.

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and achieve well. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make good progress overall and, by the time they leave school, attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science. This represents good achievement from their attainment on entry. Teaching is effective overall and contributes to pupils' good achievement. Nonetheless, not all teachers consistently set work that closely matches pupils' individual needs. Leaders are committed to remedying this. Action taken to improve pupils' skills in writing has proved successful. As a result, pupils are now more competent in writing sentences with accurate vocabulary, punctuation and spelling. Leaders are not complacent and realise correctly that there is more to do to raise standards even further. This includes providing more opportunities for pupils to write purposefully in different styles across the curriculum. Furthermore, pupils' skills in assessing how well they are doing and deciding the next steps they need to take to improve are at an early stage of development.

Pupils behave well and enjoy coming to school. Their positive attitudes to learning contribute well to the progress they make. The curriculum is planned well to build systematically on pupils' skills. A wide range of enrichment activities, including well-attended extra-curricular clubs, add further interest and variety to pupils' learning. Improvements to the outdoor area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have made it a more stimulating place in which to learn. Nonetheless, its use does not fully support their development across all areas of learning. The care of pupils is at the heart of the school's work and this is much appreciated by parents and carers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on pupils' good achievement, by:
 - providing further opportunities for them to write purposefully in different styles,

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across the curriculum

- ensuring that teachers are more consistent in setting work that meets their individual needs
- fully involving them in assessing how they might improve their work.
- Strengthen leadership and management by developing the skills of subject leaders in promoting whole-school improvement.
- Develop the use of the outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage to better promote children's learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils achieve well, are keen to learn and they participate in activities enthusiastically. They work well together in pairs and small groups and particularly enjoy practical activities. This was evident in a science lesson for pupils in Year 5 when they were investigating the processes of evaporation. Pupils' reading skills are above average and they enjoy books. They have good skills in constructing sentences with accurate vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. They are less skilled in using a variety of styles that include poetry, and instructional and narrative writing to support their work in other subjects. Pupils are adept at using their mathematical calculation skills to solve real-life number problems and information and communication technology in a variety of contexts. There is no significant difference between the achievements or the learning of different groups. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other pupils because of the well-targeted extra support they receive. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on target to attain above average standards, which have been maintained in the national tests over the last three years.

Pupils are polite, considerate and appreciate the ideas and views of others. They willingly take on responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council. Pupils have a well developed awareness of the traditions and beliefs of other cultures, which is enhanced by work in geography and links with schools in Madrid and Pamplona. They know the need to eat a balanced diet and take regular exercise in order to stay healthy. Pupils contribute well to the local community, such as by involvement in the Maghull in Bloom organisation, planting flowers and tidying up the local environment. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school. Pupils' above average attendance and the way they are making good progress in gaining basic skills, mean that they are well prepared for the next stage of education and for their future lives.

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.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and explain new ideas clearly and confidently. They manage lessons well so that pupils are fully engaged in their work and little time is lost. Questioning is used successfully to find out what pupils know and can do, and to develop their skills of speaking and listening. Good planning usually ensures groups of different ability are given work that challenges them effectively, but this is not always the case. Pupils are informed about their progress and how to improve, through teachers' marking and by talking to adults. They are not fully involved in assessing their own progress and how they might improve. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support all pupils, in particular those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Adults promote good relationships, which leads to classrooms being friendly and calm places in which to learn.

The remodelling of the curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is effectively linking subjects together to make learning more relevant and exciting for pupils. The emphasis is on practical activity and this skills-based approach to learning is beginning to be extended to pupils in Years 3 to 6. Visits to places of educational interest, including Dewa Roman Experience and Knowsley Safari Park, and opportunities to work with a variety of visitors, extend pupils' skills and widen their horizons. The curriculum has been developed well to promote community cohesion at an international level. Pupils have the opportunity to learn French and Spanish and take part in events, such as themed International Days. Links with schools in other countries effectively develop pupils' understanding of cultures different to their own. This provision has been recognised by the school gaining the Intermediate International Schools' Award.

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The school is a safe place in which to learn and play. Rigorous child protection procedures mean that staff know the steps to take if they have any concerns about the well-being of a pupil. Well-targeted support for potentially vulnerable pupils plays an important role in supporting their learning and development. Transition arrangements are smooth throughout the school and onto secondary school, and contribute well to pupils' development. Established links with outside agencies, including the educational psychologist, ensure extra support for individual pupils is readily available, if required. The school has been successful in improving attendance since the last inspection and it is now above average.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders establish ambition and drive improvement well by focusing the school on priorities. They motivate staff by communicating high expectations about securing improvement. The governing body is supportive of the school and effectively evaluates its performance and influences its development. All safeguarding requirements are met and arrangements are regularly reviewed. Training of staff in safeguarding, particularly child protection, is of good quality. The school promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination well. A good example of this is the way leaders took action after identifying that girls were not as engaged or attaining as well as boys in mathematics. As a result, girls now enjoy their mathematical activities and the gap in attainment between them and boys is narrowing rapidly. Relationships with most parents and carers are good and the school employs a useful variety of strategies to help them to support their child's learning. Leaders promote community cohesion well within the school and pupils from different backgrounds get on well with each other. The school has worked successfully over the last year to improve cohesion at a national level. This has included linking with a school in Rochdale that has a high percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups. This has enabled pupils to engage effectively with others from backgrounds not represented in the immediate community.

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

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The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children achieve well from their skill levels on starting school, which vary but generally are below those expected for their age, and enter Year 1 with average standards. In Nursery and Reception, adults work well as a team and provide activities that are interesting, practical and often based on children's own experiences. As a result, children are fully engaged in their work and make good progress. This was evident in a numeracy session for children in Reception in which they were developing their counting skills by making Gingerbread Men number lines. There is a good balance between activities directed by adults and those chosen by children. This contributes positively to their development as independent learners. Children play happily together, willingly sharing resources and also taking turns fairly. Relationships between adults and children are good, which has a positive impact on the progress children make. An interesting range of enrichment activities enhances the curriculum, such as seasonal walks around the local area and a visit to Chester Zoo. Children's welfare is promoted well and the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Good leadership ensures that assessment procedures are thorough and provide an accurate record of children's progress and achievement. Activities provided in the outdoor area do not always link sufficiently to learning that has taken place indoors. Parents and carers say that staff are approachable and keep them informed of their child's progress and how they can support learning at home.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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Views of parents and carers

Just over 48% of parents and carers completed questionnaires. The very large majority of these were positive about the school's work and the efforts of all staff. Two comments were typical of many, 'The school is approachable and works hard to work with parents and children to ensure good progress. Any concerns are dealt with professionally and swiftly,' and, 'My child joined the school last year. The staff and children made him feel so welcome, he has never been so happy in school.' A few did not agree that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. There was no such behaviour observed during the inspection and pupils say it is dealt with promptly if it occurs. A very small minority of parents and carers did not agree that the school took account of their concerns and suggestions nor helped them to support their children's learning. Inspection evidence does not support these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St George's Catholic Primary 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 107 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 220 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	50	45	42	7	7	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	58	54	45	42	3	3	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	36	34	59	55	9	8	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	33	62	58	9	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	37	35	62	58	4	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	31	60	56	13	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	35	64	60	3	3	1	1
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)	34	32	61	57	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	35	59	55	9	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	35	38	36	23	21	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	33	50	47	13	12	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	40	37	52	49	8	7	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	43	50	47	8	7	1	1

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



13 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St George's Catholic Primary School, Liverpool, L31 5PD

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave the team when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the many interesting things you do. You go to a good school.

The inspectors judge that:

- children get off to good start in the Nursery and Reception classes and by the time you leave school you have achieved well
- adults look after you well and make sure you are safe
- many of you take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities
- you make a good contribution to school life and to the local community
- in your questionnaires, you say you learn a lot at school and adults explain how you could improve your work
- the headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to help you do even better.

We have asked your school to:

- raise standards by giving you more opportunities to write in other subjects, in addition to English, making sure teachers always give you work that makes you think hard and involving you in deciding how to improve your work
- develop the skills of teachers who lead subjects in helping the school improve
- make better use of the outdoor area for children in the Nursery and Reception classes to support their learning.

All of you are a credit to your school and can help it improve further by continuing to try your best in your activities.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings

Lead inspector

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