

St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104932
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	336389
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Clare Henderson

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	331
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael Birkby
Headteacher	Mrs Kathy Sullivan
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and held meetings with staff, pupils, parents, carers and governors. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence including material on pupils' progress, safeguarding, the curriculum and questionnaires completed by parents.

The inspectors reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at the following:

- the attainment, progress and learning for all groups of pupils, in particular, boys, higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the quality of teaching, assessment and the curriculum in ensuring all pupils achieve their potential
- the effectiveness of community cohesion and pupils' preparation for life in a multicultural Britain
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in bringing about sustained improvements in pupils' learning.

Information about the school

This school is larger than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is above average. The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a morning and afternoon class for Nursery-age children and two classes for those of Reception age. The breakfast club provides before-school care.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Elizabeth's is a satisfactory school with good features. Key strengths include good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage; good links with parents and strong partnerships within the local community, which contribute effectively to pupils' good personal development. Parents are appreciative of the good care and support their children receive. A typical comment, expressing the views of many, was, 'Staff are very approachable and understanding; they make families feel part of the school community.' However, the school's work on community cohesion beyond the local area is less well developed.

Since the last inspection, the quality of pupils' learning and the progress they make has been inconsistent. Pupils' achievement in mathematics and science is good and, by the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average. However, pupils' progress in English, particularly in writing, and especially for boys and more able pupils, is slower but satisfactory. The presentation of pupils' work and the overall quality of their written work are weaknesses. The school has begun to focus on writing by introducing more opportunities for pupils to make better use of writing throughout the school day. The impact has yet to be seen on standards.

The quality of teaching and the use teachers make of assessment to ensure all pupils achieve their potential are satisfactory. Where teaching is good, teachers set work for pupils appropriately matched to their interests and capabilities. However, when work is too easy or too difficult for pupils to succeed they begin to lose interest. This occurs when assessment is not used well enough.

The satisfactory curriculum is enriched well with features such as a wide range of interesting after-school clubs, which pupils really enjoy. The school has focused on improving areas of weakness in teaching, provision and outcomes, and there is a trend of rising standards in mathematics and science. Although school leaders, including governors, embed ambition and secure improvement satisfactorily, the school improvement plan lacks sharpness in identifying clearly what and how significant progress can be made in pupils' academic achievement and how the plan is checked and evaluated. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in English by:
 - providing activities which will increase boys' eagerness to write
 - ensuring all pupils, particularly the more able, are given more opportunities to

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extend their writing in all subjects

- improving the presentation of pupils' work, in particular their handwriting, by implementing a consistent approach throughout the school and prioritising the teaching of handwriting.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring:
 - teachers plan lessons which match pupils' capabilities and interests
 - teachers make good use of day-to-day assessments to ensure all pupils achieve their potential.
- Improve the quality of the school's self-evaluation and performance by:
 - clearly identifying in the school improvement plan areas for improvement and timescales to achieve them
 - ensuring governors are more involved in setting priorities and in rigorously monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress.
- Develop, implement, monitor and review the school's community cohesion strategy to take greater account of different socio-economic, religious and ethnic groups beyond the local area.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Inspectors observed that, when the quality of teaching is good, pupils' enjoyment in lessons is tangible. Similarly, they noted that the school has effectively changed its approach to teaching mathematics and science in response to pupils' slower rate of progress in these subjects in past years. As a result, pupils throughout the school develop their mathematical and scientific skills well through practical activities including investigations. This approach is particularly effective for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and boys, and has been instrumental in lifting achievement to good for all pupils in mathematics and science. Good progress has not been achieved in English, especially in writing. This is because pupils, particularly boys and the more able, have insufficient opportunities to extend their writing across a range of subjects.

Pupils' behaviour is good. They enjoy school and are enthusiastic about the many responsibilities they hold. For instance, as school councillors they really feel they can bring about change. They are particularly proud of their role in improving the toilet facilities. Pupils say they feel safe and know who to go to if they need help. 'Teachers stop bullying straight away here', is a view expressed by many pupils. Pupils speak confidently and with commitment of the benefits of a balanced diet, regular exercise and the necessity to care for their environment. Their fundraising and choir singing in the locality reflect their contribution to communities outside school. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Because they get little first-hand knowledge of the way of life of people from different ethnic backgrounds, their cultural development is

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satisfactory. Attendance rates are broadly average and the school works hard, and with some success, to engage the small minority of families whose attendance levels are poor. Pupils acquire basic skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology that equip them satisfactorily for their future life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Where the quality of teaching is good, lessons are planned well around clear objectives that are shared with pupils. Relationships are good and little time is lost in gaining pupils' attention. However, when teaching is satisfactory, lessons are not always pitched at the right level. This is because teachers do not consistently use information gathered through assessments well enough to ensure lessons fully match pupils' skills and understanding. A number of dedicated teaching assistants help support those pupils who find learning difficult to make satisfactory progress.

Pupils enjoy most lessons, especially when the emphasis is on practical activities. However, the curriculum does not enable pupils to make enough progress in developing their English and, in particular, their writing skills. The curriculum is enriched by the

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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provision of Spanish lessons and pupils have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument or to enter the children's university. These opportunities and a good range of after-school clubs, visitors and visits help promote pupils' good personal development. Procedures to ensure health and safety including child protection are in place. Pastoral support for pupils is good and they talk about the high level of trust they have in their teachers. The school works well with a range of external agencies to support pupils' personal development and enjoys strong links with parents and carers who say, 'nothing is too much trouble; staff are always there to help in times of need'. Arrangements to prepare pupils for secondary school are successful, and help to ensure a smooth transition to the next stage of education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior managers provide satisfactory leadership. The positive ethos promotes pupils' enjoyment of school and their sense of well-being. All staff feel valued and share the leadership's ambition to raise standards and improve provision. Even so, because systems for school evaluation are not sharply focused on identifying steps and timescales to raise achievement, progress in driving academic improvements in English has been slow. Leaders satisfactorily ensure pupils have equality of opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the school's provision. However, there is more to be done to ensure boys and more able pupils achieve their potential in English, particularly in writing.

Every effort is made to eliminate discrimination. The effective pastoral work with families and the opportunities for the local community to be involved in the school's work and in using its facilities are good. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily.

Governors provide good support but their evaluation of the school's work is less effective. This is because they do not evaluate closely enough the progress the school makes in raising pupils' achievement. The school adopts good practice in relation to safeguarding procedures and meets legal requirements. There are appropriate checks made on all adults who work in the school and effective health and safety checks are carried out. There are sufficient staff trained in first aid and named persons for child protection.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children begin the Nursery with skills which are below those expected for their age, particularly in their social and language development. Good relationships with parents established before their children start school ensure children settle happily. Groups, such as weekly 'start rite' sessions, where babies and toddlers with their parents meet and play together with nursery staff, smooth the transition to school.

Parents comment, 'Learning is fun here', and this quickly becomes the children's motto as they play confidently, choosing to play indoors or in well-planned and continually developing outdoor spaces. Good teaching and pastoral care enable children to make good progress. Regular assessments of children's progress allow teaching to reflect children's developing needs and to record their progress. The effective teaching of letters and sounds is paying dividends, with those aspects improving at a good pace during children's time in the Nursery and Reception classes. By the time they transfer to Year 1, most children are working at the levels expected for their age.

The classrooms provide a welcoming environment and, with good welfare provision, lead children to comment that they feel safe and secure. Children's behaviour is good and inspectors observed them playing together cooperatively and harmoniously. The leader has a clear picture of children's progress, based on regular assessments, although analysis and tracking of children's progress are at an early stage of development.

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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

Views of parents and carers

Most parents who replied to the questionnaire are content with the quality of education and care provided at St Elizabeth's. Comments include: 'the school staff are caring and approachable'; and, 'the school has a happy and friendly environment'. A few parents disagree that unacceptable behaviour is dealt with effectively. The inspectors found nothing during the inspection to uphold this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Elizabeth'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 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 331 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	123	75	38	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	124	76	36	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	113	69	46	28	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	104	63	56	34	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	107	65	52	32	0	0	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	89	55	68	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	96	59	62	38	2	1	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)	89	55	67	41	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	96	59	65	40	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	96	59	55	34	6	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	88	54	71	44	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	97	60	62	38	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	111	69	44	27	1	1	2	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 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.



Thank you for being so helpful and polite during your school's inspection. The inspectors enjoyed the time spent with you and I am writing to let you know what we found out.

It was good to hear how much you like coming to school and enjoy learning and that you make good progress in your mathematics and science lessons. It was also pleasing to hear about how safe you feel in school and that there is always someone to talk to if you have concerns. You behave well and you know about how to keep healthy and safe. Those of you involved in the school council take your duties seriously and many of you take responsibility to look after others.

We judge that you go to a satisfactory school. You get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Your teachers and other staff help you to achieve satisfactorily in your lessons. The school takes good care of you and helps you to get on well together. The curriculum is satisfactory and you have some good opportunities for after-school activities.

The headteacher and governors want the school to become even better and so I have asked them to do several things to improve the school:

- give you all, in particular boys and those of you who learn quickly, regular opportunities to improve your writing and the general presentation of your work
- use assessment information to set work in lessons which is challenging and interesting for you
- for leaders, including governors, to make clear plans for the school and regularly check that you are achieving as well as you can
- broaden your knowledge of different people and religions beyond your area.

We hope you will play your part by continuing to work hard and do your best. You can help by trying especially hard to write neatly and write well.

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