

Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133337
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	341377
Inspection dates	25–26 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Nigel Cromey-Hawke

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	Mrs B Ness
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Bannon
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2007
School address	Hedgefield Road Liverpool Merseyside L25 2RW
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons, observing eight teachers and all classes. They also held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including development plans, self-evaluation records, policies and performance data. Questionnaires from 46 parents and carers, 87 pupils and 11 staff were scrutinised.

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

- what the school is doing to raise attainment for boys, and in writing and mathematics
- what the school is doing to reverse the decline in attendance
- how the school is improving the quality of learning and teaching.

Information about the school

This is a primary school of average size. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with a very small number who speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The proportion known to be eligible for a free school meal is well above average. The school has Healthy Schools and Activemark awards and operates a breakfast club. There is a children's centre on site managed separately from the school.

The school has suffered significant staff changes since the last inspection and has been led by an acting headteacher for the last year.

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

Our Lady of the Assumption is a satisfactory school. It is improving rapidly after a dip in standards, following a period of lack of staff continuity. It has some good features and one parent, reflecting a typical view, commented that the school had brought her two children's, 'educational, social and emotional development skills on in leaps and bounds'.

Children gain a good start to their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result of the good teaching, care, curriculum and leadership and management there. Standards by the end of Year 6 fell to low levels three years ago and progress throughout the school was sometimes inadequate. In the last two years attainment has risen to broadly average, following a programme of support for teaching and learning. Previous weaknesses in some subject areas have been mostly overcome and gaps between boys' and girls' performance have been reduced. Progress is now at least satisfactory and in some cases good for most groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Attendance is low but this year has improved significantly, with the virtual elimination of persistent absenteeism.

Learning and teaching are satisfactory. Some teaching is good or better but much remains satisfactory. In these lessons there is not a suitable match of activities to pupils' needs and independent learning is insufficiently promoted. The curriculum has an appropriate focus upon key literacy and numeracy skills, although pupils' understanding of world diversity is underdeveloped. The pastoral support provided by the school is good but the overall care, guidance and support is satisfactory. This is because of the unproven nature of some of its recently introduced practices. Most pupils clearly enjoy their time in school and say they feel safe and valued. They respond by behaving well and taking upon themselves many forms of responsibility for helping the school to run smoothly. Pupils have a well developed sense of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle. Partnership working is strong and the school engages well with parents and carers. Community cohesion is satisfactory, with pupils' understanding of and contacts with the wider world underdeveloped. Safeguarding arrangements are good. Leaders and managers, including governors, are driving improvement forward with energy and skill, helped by effective self-evaluation practices. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of learning and progress for all groups of pupils by:
 - ensuring a better match of activities in lessons to meet the needs of pupils

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- giving pupils more opportunities to explain their own learning and to work more independently.
- Broaden pupils' understanding of and contact with the richness of the wider world.
- Develop strategies to further improve attendance.
- About 40% of 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**

Attainment is broadly average and achievement satisfactory. In the best lessons, pupils are fully engaged and make good progress as a result of the good and sometimes outstanding teaching. Pupils collaborate well and respond to the good range of activities provided for them that match their needs well. Learning is satisfactory in the majority of lessons, but improving rapidly. Test and teacher assessment data show an initial decline in standards since the last inspection, with pupils reaching low levels across their subjects by the time they left the school in 2007 and again in mathematics in 2008. As a result of a programme of support and challenge, helped by more stable staffing, standards on exit rose to broadly average last year, including the numbers gaining the higher levels in English and mathematics. Previous weaknesses in boys' attainment and in writing have been largely overcome. Attainment is now broadly average across most of the school and in some cases above average. The assessment system and lesson observations show that most pupils now make at least satisfactory progress. Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make satisfactory progress. Some make good progress, as a result of the care and support they receive. As a result the majority of pupils in the school are on track to meet the challenging targets the school has set.

The vast majority of pupils say they feel safe and well looked after. They value the improvements brought about recently in teaching and learning. They respond by behaving well and taking on many responsibilities for the daily running of the school, including through the effective school council. They also carry out extensive work in helping to support the local community. The promotion of pupil's future economic well-being is satisfactory. The attendance of the majority is improving rapidly, but overall is low. This is because of the past high levels of persistent absence from a small group of pupils. The school takes this very seriously and this year has taken strong steps, including legal action, that have been highly successful. The school places a high priority upon pupils' well-being, and their understanding of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle is good, reflecting the school's awards. Many attend the breakfast club and get a good start to their day in school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Whilst spiritual understanding is good and social skills largely well developed, pupils' awareness of the diversity of the modern world and their wider cultural understanding is weaker.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory across the school and improving strongly. There is some that is good and some outstanding. In the better lessons, good planning ensures that varied activities are provided that meet the needs of pupils and good pace and challenge from the teacher stimulates their interest. The school is developing good assessment and in the good lessons the results of this clearly inform teaching and help assistants target support sessions where appropriate. The majority of lessons lack this rigour, however. Activities are not as well matched to the often complex needs of pupils. In these lessons there is often too much teacher direction, pupils are not able to demonstrate their learning by contributing fully to class discussion and there are limited opportunities for independent working. As a result progress slows, although behaviour remains good.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is undergoing a major review at present, with a focus upon bringing real life experiences into lessons to make them more interesting and relevant to pupils. Good partnership working is supporting the curriculum well, with expertise being brought into the school by local providers. Information and communication technology is being increasingly well used to support learning. Themed approaches that link different subjects together are also being developed. Much of this work has yet to be evaluated and tailored to meet the needs of all groups of pupils. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, especially sport, that support pupils' personal development well.

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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The care, guidance and support provided by the school are satisfactory. The levels of pastoral care are good and the school works well with outside agencies to help ensure that vulnerable pupils' needs are identified and support put in place for them. The school engages well with parents, especially those reluctant to come into school, arranging for them to attend family learning experiences at the children's centre. The school also helps many parents support their child's learning, through its well established 'Come and See' sessions, where pupils and parents experience lessons together. Parents are highly appreciative of the efforts made by the school to communicate with them and support their families' needs. Some of the school's practices have recently been extended from the good welfare provision operating within the Early Years Foundation Stage and have yet to be embedded fully across the school. The longer term impact of concerted efforts to raise attendance this year has yet to be seen in pupils' learning and personal development.

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	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership of the school has responded well to the challenges of recent years. It has stabilised staffing and begun to improve standards. The talented acting headteacher has introduced good assessment systems that more accurately chart pupils' progress, although they are not yet used consistently by all staff to shape their teaching. There is a clear and well coordinated drive towards improvement. Self-evaluation practices are good and there are appropriate, although rather lengthy, plans in place to support future growth. Safeguarding practices are well established, with high levels of staff awareness of child protection issues and good site safety. The governing body has been significantly restructured over the last few years. It is committed to the improvement drive and supports the school satisfactorily. The school is inclusive. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory and the school has effective procedures for dealing with any form of discrimination. Community cohesion is satisfactory overall. It is good at school and local level, and pupils benefit from strong links with other faith schools regionally. Links with Africa are effective and there are clear plans for developing further international contacts. The school recognises, however, that pupils' understanding of the diversity of the modern world and their contact with it are underdeveloped.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

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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

Children enter the Nursery with knowledge, understanding and skills that are below those typical for their age and sometimes well below, especially in language development. Children settle well and enjoy their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of the good care they receive and the warm, positive atmosphere. There is a strong emphasis upon developing the basic skills and upon literacy and numeracy. Learning is recorded in detail and children's development carefully monitored and communicated regularly to parents and carers. Children make good progress as a result of the good and sometimes outstanding teaching in an environment that meets their needs well. Those children with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress because of the extra support they receive from the talented and hard working adults in the early years setting.

Teachers plan a good range of activities with a good balance between those that they direct themselves and ones that children choose. As a result, behaviour is good. By the time they leave, children are able to play and work together well, having reached expected levels in most areas of their learning. The outdoor area is well resourced but children's ability to move freely between it and indoor areas is currently limited by the building design, although there are plans in place to address this. Leadership and management are good, with training up-to-date and safeguarding measures fully in place. There are good plans in evidence for extending the already good improvement since the last inspection in this area of the school.

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

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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

Although the proportion of questionnaires returned was low, the vast majority of these parents are very happy with most aspects of the school. They consider that the school provides a safe and caring environment for their children. They are especially appreciative of how well the school communicates with them and how it helps promote an understanding within their children of healthy living. Inspectors agree with these views. A small number of parents felt that they were not well informed about their children's progress but inspection evidence showed that school systems are good in this respect.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Our Lady of the Assumption 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 46 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	31	67	13	28	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	74	11	24	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	63	12	26	5	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	57	17	37	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	52	19	41	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	52	17	37	4	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	52	22	48	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)	23	50	16	35	3	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	52	17	37	3	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	43	19	41	3	7	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	43	22	48	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	23	50	21	46	2	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	61	14	30	3	7	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

	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.



27 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School, Liverpool, L25 2RW

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me and the team when we inspected your school recently. You were very friendly, polite and enthusiastic about what you do. You told us a lot of interesting things about your school and you are clearly very proud of it.

Our Lady of the Assumption is a satisfactory school, with some good features. You get a good start to your learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress as a result of the good and sometimes outstanding teaching, and the good care you receive there. In the past progress has been slower in Key Stages 1 and 2 because of weaker teaching but this is improving strongly. The range of subjects that you take is satisfactory, but there is a good focus upon literacy and numeracy, and previous weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics and writing have largely been overcome. As a result, most of you, including those who find learning difficult, are making at least satisfactory progress. Some of you are making good progress. The school cares for your well-being and works well with partners and your parents and carers, especially over your attendance, which has improved dramatically over the last year. Well done! You know what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle. You say you feel safe in school, help a great deal in its daily running and your behaviour is good. Again, well done! I have asked the school to consider these things that will help make it a better place to learn:

- make sure that all your lessons are at least good
- help you to understand the wider world and to increase your contact with it
- take steps to further raise attendance.

You can help by telling your teachers how you learn best, by letting them know if you have any problems and by coming to school every day. I wish you the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Nigel Cromey-Hawke

Lead inspector

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