



Our Lady of Compassion Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 104930
Local Authority Sefton
Inspection number 287068
Inspection date 28 February 2007
Reporting inspector Frank Carruthers

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bull Cop
School category	Voluntary aided		Formby, Liverpool
Age range of pupils	3–11		Merseyside L37 8BZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01704 877281
Number on roll (school)	290	Fax number	01704 877281
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev Fr B Higham
		Headteacher	Mrs M Lynn
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection date 28 February 2007	Inspection number 287068
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This average sized Catholic primary school serves the parish of Our Lady's and St. Anne's in Formby, a residential town on Merseyside. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and none is learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is low and the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has the Basic Skills Quality Mark 3, the ActiveMark and the Eco-schools Bronze Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school in which pupils make excellent progress in both their personal and academic development. Standards in English, mathematics and science are high and have been sustained at this level since the time of the last inspection. All pupils achieve exceptionally well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Boys achieve as well as girls, which is contrary to the national trend of girls outperforming boys in English. This is because there is an equal focus given to boys' interests as well as girls' in order to encourage reading and writing. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and behave exceptionally well. They become very articulate, sensible learners who take on responsibility around school with enthusiasm and enjoy school very much. They have an excellent awareness of personal safety and the importance of a fit and healthy lifestyle, and develop all the skills necessary to become effective students at secondary school.

These outstanding outcomes are the product of the school's provision, the quality of care, guidance and support the school offers all its pupils and the support the pupils receive from their parents, which is much appreciated by the school. The quality of teaching and learning is excellent across the whole age range and teamwork among senior staff, teachers and classroom assistants is a particular strength. This is a school that is continuously striving to improve what it offers. The curriculum is outstanding because staff introduce initiatives and projects, both locally based and of national importance, that add tremendously to the experiences the pupils are given. The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are outstanding, because the provision is exceptionally well led and managed by the assistant headteacher, promoting learning through first-hand experiences and imaginative play.

This is an exceptionally well led and managed school at every level. The headteacher's approach is to enable those around her to be adventurous, to experiment and go beyond the usual in order to enrich what they do. The school's self-evaluation processes are excellent and its views on its performance match the judgements in this report exactly. Partnerships with parents and outside agencies are further key strengths that have notable benefits for pupils' personal and academic development. The school is held in high regard by all associated with it. It has maintained the high standards of provision and pupils' attainment evident at the last inspection and has excellent capacity to maintain its quality. The school gives outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- The school has identified appropriate priorities to build on what has been achieved so there are no further ones to add.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children start in the Nursery with levels of attainment that are in line with or better than those expected of children at the age of three, though there are a few whose attainment is below expectations. They make excellent progress throughout the Nursery and Reception classes and almost all achieve the goals for learning expected of them by the end of the Reception year. A good number are working at higher levels. This is because of the high quality provision in which staff encourage the children to be independent and work out solutions to problems for themselves, and because their efforts are always applauded and praised.

This excellent start is built upon extremely well in Years 1 to 6 so that, by the time they leave the school at the age of 11, almost all pupils have reached the expected level in English, mathematics and science and about two thirds have reached a much higher level. This notable performance is significantly above the average found in primary schools nationally and has been sustained over time through highly effective teaching. In the last three years, the value that the school has added to the pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 places the school in the top 10% of schools nationally.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons very much and find the project days when there is a focus on a particular subject such as art and design or design and technology very rewarding. They say 'It's great when you get things finished.' They have no concern about bullying, which they report 'isn't what happens in our school because people are friendly'. Levels of attendance are good. Pupils become independent learners early in their school life, something which is encouraged right from the start and this promotes self-confidence and creativity. Pupils have a keen awareness of children less fortunate than themselves and continually support charities and events to help others. They are well regarded in the local community and regularly take part in inter-school activities and perform for members of the public. The establishment of a school council in recent years has meant the pupils have a good opportunity to voice their opinions about school. They point to several improvements they have contributed to, for instance, facilities in their excellent playgrounds, which add much to their fitness and health. In addition there is an Eco team which takes a high profile in helping to maintain a clean environment where re-cycling is a priority.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The school is proud of the way it promotes the professional development of staff to benefit the quality of pupils' learning. Because of the outstanding partnerships it has fostered with other schools and institutions, staff share best practice that they have experienced and introduce initiatives that enhance the learning of all pupils. Recent examples of this have been a focus on pupils' emotional development, on improving pupils' writing through speaking, listening and drama, and on pupils evaluating their own and others' work. Teachers' planning covers the needs of all pupils and their questioning skills are highly effective, leading to very thoughtful learners. Teamwork is a key strength and teaching assistants make an excellent contribution to learning in classes and small groups. A few parents express concern about the large size of classes in Years 3, 5 and 6, but the deployment of teaching and support staff is such that the ratio between adults and pupils is very favourable. There is no evidence that class size adversely affects pupils' learning or achievement. The marking of pupils' work is excellent, being focused on pupils' targets and on how pupils should improve their efforts. Staff use a code in marking pupils' writing that helps pupils to understand how well they are doing and what structures, vocabulary and punctuation they need to use in order to reach a higher level.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum provides an outstanding range of experiences for pupils. This is a school in which teachers pursue the exceptional. The school has not only the Basic Skills Quality Mark, but is involved in a learning network with other schools, which has led to several projects that have received national recognition for their quality. These include projects that have led to inspirational work in subjects such as art and design, design and technology and music. In addition, there has been research on independent learning and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the Foundation Stage. The curriculum is designed to make connections between subjects so that pupils understand and enjoy their learning better. The school has achieved the ActiveMark and this promotes pupils' understanding of a fit, healthy and safe lifestyle exceptionally well and there is a good emphasis on the importance of ecological and environmental issues. Spanish is taught to all classes and pupils are growing in confidence in their second language which sets them up well for their future. Extra-curricular activities are varied according to the season and there are valuable residential experiences of outdoor and adventurous activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There are outstanding systems for monitoring and supporting the welfare and progress of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The learning mentor programme contributes extremely effectively in fostering outside links for the benefit of individual pupils; for example, when pupils are about to transfer to secondary school. Links are established with pre-school settings and extended provision is offered through a Breakfast and After-school club. A Start Right group for parents with toddlers helps to promote high quality opportunities for play for these children.

Pupils with additional needs are identified very early and there is involvement of outside agencies to do the best for these pupils. Parents are included well in reviewing their children's progress and comment very favourably on how staff are approachable and supportive. The tracking of pupils' personal and academic progress is excellent. For instance, the school is involved in pilot studies monitoring and tracking progress in pupils' writing and mathematics. Parents are well informed about pupils' targets. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils, such as child protection procedures, the safe recruitment of staff and risk assessment, are in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school's leaders and managers are highly effective in promoting a vibrant learning environment where innovation is encouraged and high standards are expected. The headteacher has fostered an ethos of aspiration and her example is taken up by all staff. She is exceptionally well supported by a highly skilled assistant headteacher. The 'can do' approach enthuses the pupils too and a frequent comment from parents is that their child 'has gained an enormous amount of confidence' and 'blossomed' at the school. The leadership is ever striving to make improvements and has not only maintained high standards since the last inspection but has added significantly to its provision. For example, in developing the extended school day, the Foundation Stage, ICT, a modern foreign language and the school grounds which provide a safe and attractive place to play. Procedures to monitor and evaluate the school's work are excellent and involve senior staff and subject leaders observing lessons and scrutinising teachers' planning and pupils' work. There are many examples of the staff acting on findings to make improvements. Governors fulfil their roles exceptionally well and have forged strong links with subject leaders and classes. This gives them first-hand experience of life in school. They are not complacent and can point to examples where they challenge the senior leaders to account for proposals and explain performance data. The cost of educating a pupil at the school is below the average of primary schools nationally and, because of the high standards and quality, the school gives outstanding value for money.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for your help when I inspected your school. Please pass on my thanks to the other children I spoke to while at school. I enjoyed my visit very much. Now I want to share with you what I thought about your school.

Yours is an outstanding school. Here are some of the things that make your school so very, very good:

- the staff take excellent care of you all and teach you exceptionally well
- your headteacher and assistant headteacher are outstanding in the way they lead your school
- your attitude to your school work is excellent and it is clear that you really enjoy school and are growing into very sensible students
- I was impressed with how very well you are doing in English, mathematics and science to reach high standards
- the staff provide you with great opportunities in your lessons, for example, in art and design, music, and design and technology, and in after-school activities, residential visits and trips.

Congratulations to everyone involved in your school. You should feel very proud! There is nothing important that the school needs to improve. Carry on the excellent work.