

Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104638
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	324082
Inspection date	11 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Jon Lovgreen

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	250
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bishop Tom Williams
Headteacher	Mrs A Brodie
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Northumberland Terrace Everton Liverpool Merseyside L5 3QF

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	11 December 2008
Inspection number	324082

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Age group 3–11

Inspection date 11 December 2008

Inspection number 324082

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); standards and achievement; pupils' personal development and well-being; the care, guidance and support provided by the school; and leadership and management. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report. Evidence was gathered from the school's own self-evaluation and a range of documents, meetings with staff, pupils and the chair of governors, the findings of parental questionnaires, scrutiny of books and observations of the school at work.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average inner city school. Many of the pupils' families face considerable hardship and disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is three times the national average. The school has an above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in some classes well over a third. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The school has Investors in People status and a National Healthy Schools' Award. It has close links with local universities including involvement in the 'Aim Higher' project, and being a formal partner in a teacher training/staff development project. A range of extended services, for both pupils and the community, is provided.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Our Lady Immaculate is a popular school providing an outstanding education for its pupils. It has been highly successful in balancing high quality care and support for pupils and their families with a mission to get pupils to strive to achieve their very best. The school's quest for excellence is coupled with a belief that it could do even better and a desire to find ways of doing so. As a result, despite extensive and accurate monitoring and evaluation, senior staff underestimated some aspects of the school's effectiveness. The school enjoys strong support from parents, who hold it in exceptionally high regard.

Over the past four years, end of Key Stage 2 tests have shown pupils to be meeting broadly average standards. This is outstanding achievement when the very low skills with which many pupils start school are taken into account. Provisional 2008 results show standards to have risen again in both key stages. For pupils in Year 2, achievement in mathematics was notably good. Reading standards improved, partly because of an intensive reading recovery programme. Writing continued to be weaker, especially in the case of boys. Pupils invariably meet the very challenging targets the school sets for the end of Key Stage 2 tests. All pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. Their progress is consistently much better than might be expected. One weaker feature in the last two years has been the lower proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in English. The school rightly judges this to be a specific teaching and learning issue. Teaching is good, with a particular strength in ensuring that work relates to pupils' experiences and interests. Joint planning, which includes the excellent team of teaching assistants, is another strong feature. However, some teaching relies too much on the school's excellent tracking systems, imaginative curriculum and overall work ethos to stimulate writing skills. As a result, some pupils are given too few tasks where they are challenged to write in specific styles, with detailed guidance about how to succeed in doing so.

The high quality of pupils' personal development is apparent in their exceptional sense of consideration for others. They support each other willingly and readily, and handle adults with courtesy, good humour and confidence. They develop a strong awareness of how issues impact on their own safety and that of others, both within school and in the wider community. Those taking on the many responsibilities school offers take them very seriously. They are proud of their contribution in such roles as play leaders and class mentors. In discussion, pupils show good knowledge and understanding of factors that affect their health and they have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe both in and out of school. They enthusiastically take part in a wide range of physical activities as a result, including those run by staff from the local secondary school. Pupils enjoy school immensely and value all the opportunities they get. They make a huge contribution to the life of the school and the community beyond. They have assisted in the recruitment of personnel in outside organisations and been involved in painting murals and preparing public performances. School elections and working on school council groups enable them to see how democracy and consultation operate. This has seen them take a lead on negotiating such issues as choosing appropriate school furniture, designing a snack bar and redesigning a playground. Responding so maturely to taking on responsibility is excellent development of the skills and attitudes needed for life beyond school. Attendance is broadly average and has improved significantly since the previous inspection as a result of the determined actions taken by the school, spearheaded by the learning mentor.

All staff are passionately committed to doing their very best for their pupils, each of whom is cherished and valued equally. The school is very successful in its aim of helping all pupils to experience success and share in the pleasure of seeing others succeed. This gives a major boost to pupils' confidence and self-esteem. All adults working in the school are fully aware of their responsibilities for child welfare and all safeguarding procedures meet current government requirements. There is very close, and where necessary discreet, support for children who struggle or who are identified as vulnerable. Excellent use is made of a wide network of outside bodies to support these pupils. The monitoring of academic progress is excellent. Pupils receive clear guidance about what steps they need to take to improve their standards. Much effort has gone into making pupils aware of opportunities beyond school through visits, and schemes such as 'Aim Higher', which introduce them to opportunities in higher education.

A strong sense of purpose is apparent everywhere. The school works hard and very effectively to forge a close-knit community in which pupils and adults display a keen sense of loyalty to each other. The headteacher's dynamic and aspirational leadership sets the tone. She exudes the optimism and determination which inspire colleagues and help pupils to thrive. All respond positively to this lead, working hard to sustain the school's impetus to improve. Teamwork is of the essence. Extensive but relevant training opportunities are very well used. Evaluation at all levels is very strong and leads to specific progress, such as rising standards in mathematics and reading in Key Stage 1 and the effective use of intense support in workshops for pupils in Key Stage 2. Senior managers accurately assess where improvements are needed. They are confident in their ability to bring about those improvements and resilient in their drive to achieve them. The school sets challenging targets; high quality, focused support helps pupils to reach them. The work of the governing body is excellent, hallmarked by its strong commitment to pupils' welfare, their achievements, and the quality of their environment. Given pupils' outstanding progress, both academically and personally, the school gives excellent value for money and has excellent capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children join Reception with exceptionally low age-related skills. Many lack very basic social skills such that they do not know how to play together or have difficulty relating to adults. Weak language skills can result in frustration or aggression. Some children do not recognise numbers and cannot do simple counting; others have very limited knowledge of stories and nursery rhymes. The school takes great care to assess the ability, experience and needs of the children accurately. Extensive contact with families encourages joint work and has helped to tackle issues of some initial poor attendance. Parents come to trust staff and respect the advice they give. Clear routines for work, play and behaviour help children to settle very quickly. They are soon happy, busy, and eager to please. A calm, purposeful atmosphere prevails. The progress children make in learning to work together is an especial strength. This is evident in both indoor and outdoor work, for instance in the way children queued, took turns and chatted about a croquet game in the outdoor play area. Management is extremely effective, as evidenced by regular and thorough assessment, detailed development planning and the availability of quality resources. Staff teamwork and imaginative use of the open access indoor areas are strengths. There is an excellent balance of indoor and outdoor activity and of directed and independent learning. By the end of the Reception year almost all pupils make outstanding progress in social and learning skills and in the ability to use language, although standards remain well below

national expectations. Common working arrangements and good liaison ensure smooth transition from Reception to Key Stage 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide pupils with more challenging writing tasks, and clearer guidance about how to vary styles successfully in English.

Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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 learners' needs?	2
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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

As you know, we came to your school recently to see how you are getting on, and to find out whether Our Lady Immaculate was giving you the education you deserve. Thank you for being so friendly, polite and open. We very much enjoyed meeting you and seeing your work. A special thank you to the school council and the other pupils who talked to us about how you find things – you were most helpful.

You will be thrilled to know that we think yours is an excellent school. It has a very clear idea of what will help you to learn and is always trying to improve things. This is down to the dedicated hard work of the headteacher, senior staff and governors. You and your parents know how fortunate you are to have people like this helping you. Teachers and all the adults in the school work together superbly well and want the very best for you. You respond by making every effort to do your best, and to show how fond you are of the staff. Because of this your school is a happy, lively place with lots of interesting activities for you. Some of you talked to us about 'all the great things we've experienced in this school!' You are lucky to be able to take part in such a wide range of sports, activities and projects, and to have such a say in planning what happens in school. You are learning how to get on with each other and share ideas. All this means that you are able to make excellent progress, both in the subjects you study and in learning how to tackle life outside school successfully.

Of course even outstanding schools have things they can improve. In your case we think that one stands out. We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to improve your standards in writing by helping you to write well in styles other than story and description.

You can help by doing your very best not to miss any lessons (try to make sure that the 'the empty chair' is not yours!), continuing to work as hard as you do, and following carefully all the good advice your teachers give you.