

# St Finbar's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104640
<b>Local Authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	336339
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Barry Jones

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	162
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev J Southworth
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs R Bibby
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	0 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	South Hill Road Liverpool Merseyside L8 9RY
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and held meetings with the vice-chair of governors, staff, groups of pupils and the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work and looked at documents, policies and records relating to safeguarding. They also looked at other documents such as the school development plan and the school's tracking data for pupils' progress. There were 46 responses to the parents' questionnaires and these were scrutinised. The school also voluntarily issued questionnaires to all staff and to all pupils in Years 3 to 6. The responses to these questionnaires were made available to the inspection team.

- Why do standards appear to have dropped in 2009 and how well are pupils progressing now?
- How well do different groups progress, including more-able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities?
- How accurately senior managers monitor the quality of teaching and how well teachers use assessment data to plan work for pupils?
- How effectively the school strategies promote good behaviour and attendance
- How well the school promotes community cohesion?

## Information about the school

St Finbar's is a one-form entry school with more boys (60%) than girls. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is over three times the national average. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are higher than in most schools; these are mainly Polish pupils. The school has double the average of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities; these are mainly for moderate learning difficulties. The school has Healthy Schools' status, Activemark and Eco school status. There is provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage through a Nursery and Reception class. The governors also manage a breakfast club.

The school has been involved in a local authority review of school places. Reduced numbers of pupils in recent years has meant that the school has needed to reduce the number of staff and support assistants. This also meant the reorganisation of the classes for pupils in Years 4 to 6 from single-age into mixed-age classes in 2008/09. The school has recently learned that its status is to remain unchanged. As a result, more pupils have joined the school and the school now has one class for each year group.

**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**

**2**

### Main findings

The headteacher and the governors have successfully steered the school through a turbulent time and the school is satisfactory overall. They have taken difficult decisions to reduce the large budget deficit, including making staff redundant. The uncertainties arising from possible closure of the school inevitably affected staff morale and together with fluctuating numbers, this further increased the financial restraints on the school. Throughout this time, the school maintained high levels of care which contribute to the pupils' excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes. They feel very safe and greatly enjoy school. The strong Catholic ethos underpins this very caring approach.

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The previous report stated that the school was an 'oasis of calm' and this continues to be the case.

Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 6 rose impressively from being low in 2006 to just below average in 2008. The results declined in 2009 to be low again. This was partly due to the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in this cohort. It also reflects the disruptions to learning due to the enforced reorganisation of classes. In addition, several pupils, particularly boys, do not make the progress they should in mathematics in Years 3 to 5.

Standards are rising in all year groups. New teachers have been appointed and the quality of teaching is now good throughout the school. All teachers manage their classes exceptionally well. Relationships are excellent and there is a very purposeful working atmosphere in all classrooms. Teachers usually plan work for different ability groups, but with varying success. Teachers always share the learning objective for a lesson with pupils, but it is aimed at those of average ability. The learning outcome for more-able pupils is not specified and consequently work is pitched too low for this group. It also means that the provision for more-able pupils cannot be checked by managers through a scrutiny of teachers' planning. Although progress of more-able pupils is satisfactory, it is often slower than for other pupils in the lesson. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties receive effective support and make good progress.

Teachers make use of a wide range of resources and pupils say that lessons are fun and interesting. The school is resourced well for information and communication technology (ICT). However, teachers miss opportunities to enable pupils to use ICT to develop their skills in other subjects.

Progress has been uneven since the previous inspection partly due to reasons beyond the school's control. Nevertheless, the underlying trend is upwards. There is strong leadership by the headteacher and governors. The school has stabilised and, buoyed by new appointments, teaching is now good. Pupils' learning, as seen in lessons and work

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in their books, is good and confirms that standards are on the rise. Staff morale has significantly improved and the school has succeeded in maintaining a good quality of care for pupils. As a result, the school has good capacity to improve further.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve standards for more-able pupils in English and mathematics in Years 1 to 6 by:
  - raising expectations for the levels they can achieve
  - ensuring that teachers set learning objectives in lessons that are based on pupils' prior attainment and linked to National Curriculum levels
  - strengthening the monitoring that senior managers do to check on the progress made by more-able pupils
  - considering whether it is possible to provide some targeted support for more-able pupils for these groups.
- Improve standards generally by:
  - providing guidance on how pupils can improve their work
  - accelerating the progress boys make in mathematics in Years 3 to 5
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to use ICT to develop skills in other subjects.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

In 2008, results were close to average at the end of Year 6. Given their very low starting points this reflects good progress by pupils. This was not sustained in 2009 and standards were low; the school did not meet its own targets. Cohorts are small and so it not possible to draw conclusions from one year's results for groups of pupils. Over the last three years there have been some underachieving groups. For example, boys have made consistently slower progress in mathematics, but there are no consistent disparities. Polish students, for instance, are integrated well and make the same progress as their classmates. In lessons observed, both boys and girls were thoroughly enjoying their work and collaborated well together. They come to classes expecting to learn and participate willingly and enthusiastically and most are now making good progress. Inspection evidence shows that learning and progress are now good throughout the school. Achievement overall is, therefore, satisfactory.

Pupils' understanding of how to live healthily is excellent. They do their best to adopt a balanced diet and keep themselves as fit as possible. Pupils are also fully aware of safety matters within the school; they have composed an impressive booklet which encompasses key safeguarding principles from the pupils' viewpoint. Attendance is

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average, but the proportion of pupils who are persistent absentees is below that for similar schools. This is as the result of concerted efforts by the school to promote good attendance. The quality of relationships is excellent and pupils display outstanding social and moral understanding. Their understanding of other cultures and faiths is a little less well developed. Pupils develop into mature, responsible young people and this is good preparation for later life. Their skills in numeracy, literacy and ICT, however, are improving, but remain low. Consequently, pupils' economic well-being is satisfactory.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

### How effective is the provision?

A good example of the use of ICT was observed in the Year 6 class. The teacher used a computer to display data, showing how it could be displayed both as a bar and a pie-chart. There was good use of discussion to identify what conclusions could be drawn from the graph and the chart. In some other classes, the opportunity to use ICT is missed or, when used, is not linked to the objective for the lesson. The use of assessment in class is good. Teachers listen to pupils or observe when some pupils have not understood and adjust their lesson accordingly. Most teachers do set different work

<sup>1</sup> 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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for more-able pupils. However, it is not always challenging and there is a lack of clarity in the teachers' planning to identify what this group will do and is expected to learn.

The school provides a rich range of experiences which contribute to the pupils' considerable enjoyment. These include themed weeks, such as science, topic work and a good range of extra-curricular activities. The quality of care is outstanding and contributes very strongly to excellent outcomes for pupils, such as feeling very safe and their exemplary behaviour. The school makes good provision before school including a hot breakfast. The learning mentor gives very good support for vulnerable children and those whose attendance falls below that expected. There is effective partnership with other agencies, which means that vulnerable pupils can play a full part in school life. All pupils with learning difficulties have individual education plans. These are sometimes too general, but this is frequently compensated for in the classroom by the teacher's intimate knowledge of the pupils in the small classes.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

There is accurate monitoring of the quality of teaching with constructive feedback to teachers. This is linked to effective support and to robust challenge when weaknesses in the teaching are identified. This underpins the good quality of teaching and learning. It is an example of how leaders are embedding their ambition for the school and driving improvement. The school is very inclusive and tackles inequality well; the individual child's interests and well-being are at the heart of everything the school does.

Procedures for safeguarding pupils are good and meet requirements. The deficit budget has been reduced, although a considerable sum is still outstanding. There is an appropriate three year recovery plan agreed with the local authority to put the school onto a firm financial footing. However, the deficit continues to constrain some aspects of the school's work. For example, the deputy headteacher carries a heavy work load. The local authority has given valuable support to the school in resolving its financial difficulties and in dealing with stressful redundancy issues. The school has excellent links with the church and with its local community. It has devised a good three year plan based on its audit of its community's needs. The school is currently developing international links in order to make this aspect outstanding.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the school with skills which are well below those expected for their age, particularly in communication and literacy and personal and social skills. They make good progress as a result of the good provision, but their skills are still below expected levels when children enter Year1. Children and their parents and carers are made to feel very welcome immediately and staff work hard and successfully to foster strong links with the home. For example, the majority of parents and carers of children in Nursery and Reception classes attended the Mothers' Day service organised by the school. There is a good balance of adult-led activities and opportunities for children to learn through independent, well-structured play. In one lesson, some children worked enthusiastically with a teacher to develop their language associated with measuring height; others were engrossed in role play in well-resourced areas. The outdoor area has been considerably extended and the school is continuing to develop its use. Leadership is good but not complacent. For example, the school is actively seeking to improve the curriculum further.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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**

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. There were no significant concerns expressed in the responses to the parental questionnaires. These responses reflect strong links with the local community. In some cases, generations of families have attended the school. This is illustrated by one parent's comment, 'My three children went to the school and loved it... Now my granddaughter is there. She loves it that much that she is never off...'

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Finbar'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 46 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 162 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	65	15	33	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	72	13	28	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	61	16	35	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	67	13	28	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	35	76	11	24	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	61	17	37	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	65	16	35	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)	24	52	20	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	57	20	43	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	70	12	26	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	59	18	39	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	30	65	16	35	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	76	10	22	1	2	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 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



Dear Pupils

Many thanks for your help when we inspected your school. We were very impressed by your politeness and the courteous way you received us. St Finbar's richly deserves its reputation as a very welcoming, caring school. You told us that you feel very safe in school and that you greatly enjoy your time there. St Finbar's gives you a satisfactory education overall, but some things are good and even outstanding. These are the things that we liked most about your school:

- your behaviour is exemplary and you all get on well together
- adults look after you exceptionally well and you feel very safe
- you have an excellent understanding of how to live healthily
- you have good teachers and are making good progress in your lessons
- the teachers give you interesting things to do and you greatly enjoy school
- the headteacher and the governors lead the school well.

The school is not complacent and is always striving to do even better. These are the things which we have agreed with the school to make it better:

- teachers will provide work to make the more-able pupils think harder
- senior managers are going to check that this happens
- teachers will help boys to make good progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 5
- teachers will give you feedback on your work to help you improve further
- teachers will give you more opportunities to use computers to help you learn in different subjects.

Make sure you ask if you do not understand. Your teachers will be very pleased to help you.

We wish you every success in the future. You are excellent ambassadors for St Finbar's school.

Yours sincerely

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