

St Catherine's Hoddesdon CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	133773
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	381560
Inspection dates	11–12 January 2012
Lead inspector	David Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	334
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	James Harvey
Headteacher	Mandy Staiano and Angela Wallis (Acting Headteachers)
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2009
School address	Haslewood Avenue Hoddesdon EN11 8HT
Telephone number	01992 463214
Fax number	01992 447251
Email address	admin@stcaths.herts.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	11–12 January 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Jones	Her Majesty's Inspector
Anne Wesley	Additional Inspector
Fiona Robinson	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed all full-time staff teach on two occasions and part-time teachers at least once. In all, 23 lessons were observed. HMI spoke to over 20 parents at the beginning of the school day. Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, governors, staff, and representatives of the local authority. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, received a number of telephone calls from parents, and observed the school's work. The team looked at the school's most recent self-evaluation, a recent local authority audit and a health and safety report. Inspectors scrutinised 108 parental questionnaires and evaluated the pupil and staff questionnaires.

Information about the school

The school is supported by the Church of England Diocese of St Albans and is larger than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. There are more boys than girls in the school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national figure and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is half the national figure. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average; the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is below average.

The school meets the government's minimum standards (floor standards) for primary schools. It provides accommodation for an independent 'not-for-profit' nursery group that was not part of this inspection. The previous headteacher left the school in the middle of November 2011; two acting headteachers have accepted responsibility for the leadership of the school on a job-share contract until 31 August 2012.

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	4
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	4

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to safeguarding pupils.
- Financial concerns highlighted by a local authority audit which took place at the change of headship in the autumn term are being investigated by the appropriate authorities. The governing body's oversight of the school's financial management is insufficiently robust.
- The local authority audit, which took place during the summer term, identified significant health and safety concerns with regard to the school's electrical supply. This is a breach of the school's health and safety policy and procedures and there is no evidence that the significant concerns contained within the report were brought to the governing body's attention or that governors were aware of the issue.
- The joint acting headteachers and the governing body acted quickly on this information and the local authority brought in independent experts. As a result, 'The local authority is satisfied that the building is safe for staff and pupils; a number of remedial items will receive immediate attention.' This will include all major electrical switchgear and distribution boards. Ofsted will monitor this safeguarding issue.
- Teaching is good and standards have risen notably in the last three years; as a result, the pupils' achievement is good. Attendance is rising.
- Behaviour is satisfactory overall with some volatility in the mixed-age Year 4/5 classes. In these classes, curriculum organisation and the arrangement of the

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groups of pupils for work in English and mathematics are not effective enough.

- Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well because of effectively organised provision and good teaching.
- The positive impact of the joint acting headteachers in the five weeks since they accepted responsibility for the school and the strength of teaching makes clear the school's capacity to improve further. The new leadership team have improved attendance and sought rapid redress for two very challenging weaknesses in the management of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that contractors deal with the 'remedial items' regarding electrical safety identified by the local authority with the 'immediate attention' promised. Work must begin immediately.
- In order to further enhance teaching, ensure that the quality of marking consistently matches the best provision in the school.
- Reorganise the governing body's supervision of financial and property matters, in line with current best practice.
- Reorganise provision for the mixed-age Year 4/5 classes by:
 - refining curriculum provision in foundation subjects, and
 - restructuring the organisation of English and mathematics groups.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is good and pupils progress well in each key stage. The pupils' learning and attainment seen in the classroom are above average as a direct result of effective teaching. Standards have risen consistently for the last three years and the results of the 2011 Key Stage 2 national tests were above average with notable strengths in mathematics. The proportion of pupils securing the higher Level 5 in both English and mathematics was above average and middle-ability pupils did well.

Inspectors scrutinised the pupils' books and the school's assessment data base, noting that current progress reflected the above average 2011 outcomes at both Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils of all abilities, including those with disabilities and those with special educational needs, make good progress and the small numbers of pupils who represent a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds progress as well as others.

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However, in the mixed-age Year 4/5 classes not all pupils were making good progress because of immature behaviour. The scrutiny of work revealed that the best teachers' marking was having a direct impact on pupil progress; this was clearly evident as pupils tried to improve their work following the teachers' formative comment. Some inconsistencies in marking remain and in these books pupils' progress was seen to be less consistent. Inspectors heard a range of pupils read in Year 2 and Year 6 and found their levels of fluency to be above average. Over 95% of parents and carers felt their children made good progress and would recommend the school to others.

Pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage class as a result of well-organised provision and effective teaching. Phonics are introduced appropriately and most activities develop an area of the required key skills.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching, both that seen during the inspection and over time, is securely good. Inspectors observed 23 lessons and found that teaching was good or better on nine out of 10 occasions. Staff expectations of the pupils' moral and social development are high. In most lessons, the use of assessment information to match the task to the pupils' learning needs, combined with very clear guidance, enable them to engage with the task and make good progress. In these effective lessons, tasks were well planned, questioning was skilful and learning was driven forward at a brisk pace by precise instruction.

In an outstanding Year 6 lesson, pupils in 'Hong Kong' class were carefully nurtured towards independent thinking and higher-level responses as they were introduced to report writing by analysing the features of a newspaper report. Pupils responded very positively to challenging questions that focused on a newspaper headline which illustrated a mix of French and English adjectives. In a number of English lessons staff nurtured the pupils' cultural development with work on persuasive writing related to the city name given to each class.

There was clear evidence that the best marking and some homework were having a positive impact on pupil progress, although variations in the style and effectiveness of marking remain. Well-planned curriculum provision was a positive feature of good teaching and that in mathematics has been increasingly successful in raising standards. However, pupils' behaviour in Years 4/5 was inconsistent in most subjects. The reorganisation of English and mathematics classes into different year group specific teaching groups is a priority for the new acting headteachers. In most lessons, classroom assistants sensitively maintained engagement and guided new learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Where teaching is effective, behaviour is often good; however, the mixed-age Year 4/5 classes are, occasionally, more volatile. In their questionnaire returns, parents

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and carers commented that in some lessons learning is affected by immature behaviour and the pupils' questionnaires supported this view. Eight out of 10 questionnaire returns from parents and carers indicated that the school dealt with bullying effectively, but more were positive about behaviour overall. Similarly, three quarters of pupils thought behaviour was good and they were more positive about the way the school dealt with bullying of all kinds. Overall, the behaviour observed and noted in the questionnaire responses is satisfactory.

Attendance has risen noticeably in the last term and is just above average. Effective monitoring of attendance and rapid follow-up procedures are making a difference. Punctuality to school is satisfactory and senior staff meet pupils and parents in the playground first thing in the morning, providing opportunities for engagement with families. HMI took the opportunity to speak to many parents and carers on the second morning of the inspection and all were positive about the school, their children's experience and achievement.

Leadership and management

The school failed to take action on a major issue of electrical safety brought to the headteacher's attention in the summer term. The school's health and safety policy was ignored and there was a failure to notify the governing body or the local authority; as a result of this safeguarding arrangements are judged inadequate. In addition, financial discrepancies have come to light as part of normal audit procedures carried out by the local authority at a change of headship and these are currently being investigated by the appropriate authorities.

As a result of the acting headteachers' prompt action, significant health and safety concerns have been scheduled by the local authority for immediate rectification. During the autumn term, measures to improve attendance introduced by this new senior team have proved effective.

The curriculum is good because the quality of provision delivered by staff is clearly evident in rising standards, most notably in mathematics, although some inconsistencies remain in the mixed age Year 4/5 classes. All Key Stage 2 pupils are taught French. Similarly, evidence provided of improving achievement and good teaching confirms the school's effective promotion of equality of opportunity. The pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is satisfactory with strengths in the social, moral and cultural provision fostered in the classroom.

Arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff are managed meticulously. However, many of the records relating to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching were found to be missing. As a result, HMI invited the joint acting headteachers to join the inspection team in the evaluation of teaching. The views they expressed matched the judgements recorded by inspectors. HMI reviewed the lesson observations completed by the new senior team and noted their high expectations of teaching.

The positive impact of the new leadership team on attendance and on redressing the

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key safeguarding concerns discovered is impressive in such a short period of time. When combined with the high proportion of good teaching provided and its positive impact on achievement over time, the accurate self-evaluation of the required developments confirms the school's capacity to improve further.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



13 January 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Catherine's Church of England Primary School,
Hoddesdon, EN11 8HT**

It was a great pleasure to meet so many of you when the inspection team I led visited your school. We observed lessons in every classroom and were very pleased to see you making good progress. The school's results have improved consistently for the last three years and this is because of the good teaching we consistently saw in your classes. The marking inspectors saw in your books was often very helpful and I have asked the school to make sure this always happens. Your behaviour was always at least satisfactory but some of you become over excited and do not always listen when you should; you could do better. I was pleased to see that the attendance of the few of you who struggle to get to school regularly is improving – so well done.

Your school has been given a notice to improve because of safeguarding. Therefore, in the next few weeks electricians will be in school improving things and an Ofsted inspector will come back to make sure this is done. Your two new headteachers are working very hard to take things forward and I have asked them to review the way the provision in the Years 4/5 mixed-age classes is organised. There are some of you in these classes who could focus on your work more consistently. I have asked the governing body to monitor the repair of the electrical system.

Yours sincerely

David Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

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