

St Cecilia's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102993
Local Authority	Sutton
Inspection number	376795
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Natalia Power

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	487
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Nash
Headteacher	Catharina Mayhew
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2009
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 28 lessons, taught by 13 different teachers. They talked to parents and carers, members of the governing body, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked in particular at its self-evaluation documents and plans for improvement, the data collected on pupils' progress, safeguarding information and the minutes of governing body meetings. They considered the responses in 219 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- What is the quality of the teaching and learning, and how effective are they in ensuring that all pupils make at least good progress?
- Does the curriculum provide pupils, particularly boys, with sufficient opportunities to improve the quality of their writing?
- What opportunities do pupils have to make a full contribution to the life of the school?

Information about the school

This school is larger than average in size. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than usual. Around two thirds of pupils come from White British backgrounds, and the rest from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is a little lower than average, and currently very few are at an early stage of learning the language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is a little lower than usual.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

- An exceptionally caring ethos is a key feature of this outstanding school. As one parent commented, 'My children are happy and secure and see the school as an extension of their family.' No one is overlooked, and the quality of care is second to none. The result is a happy and harmonious environment in which pupils feel confident and thrive in their learning.
- In this warm and welcoming environment, the pupils develop outstanding personal qualities. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, underpinned by the school's strong Christian values, is outstanding. As a result, the pupils' behaviour is exemplary. As full stakeholders in the school, they willingly take responsibility for their peers.
- Children get off to an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A great deal is expected even of the youngest children, and they respond with enthusiasm and enjoyment. This enthusiasm continues throughout the school and is fostered by the adults' high expectations for all the pupils. As a result, pupils leave Year 6 with attainment in English and mathematics which far exceeds that of their peers in the country as a whole.
- Pupils make good progress in their learning, and this reflects the good overall teaching. Much of the teaching seen was outstanding. Occasionally, however, the pace of learning is too slow and in these cases pupils make slower progress.
- The curriculum is creative and stimulates all pupils, boys as well as girls, to use their imagination and write fluent and interesting pieces. The play-based curriculum of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Year 1 is particularly stimulating and challenging.
- The school promotes community cohesion exceptionally well, forging extremely effective links with organisations in the local area and with schools in Britain and overseas.
- Leaders and managers know their school very well and are exceptionally rigorous in their self-evaluation. Their planning is focused, in their own words, 'on developing the whole child', as well as on ensuring that pupils receive the highest quality education. Leaders and managers have met every recommendation from the last inspection. They have raised attainment in writing, especially for boys. Pupils now take a central role in helping to make decisions and supporting their fellow pupils with any problems they might have. The school's relentless pursuit of excellence, which has seen it move from being judged good to being judged outstanding, demonstrates its outstanding capacity to sustain further improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching and learning match the generally high quality, by ensuring that all lessons are planned to provide a fast pace and a demanding level of challenge at all times.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils show their great enjoyment of school through their high attendance. Their overall achievement is outstanding. Pupils leave Year 6 with high attainment in both English and mathematics, and do particularly well at the higher levels. A scrutiny of pupils’ work throughout the school confirms the data. All groups of pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups, those who speak English as an additional language, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their above-average starting points, because they receive high quality targeted support in class or in small withdrawal groups. In lessons, the level of challenge is good overall, and outstanding in many cases, and the pupils enjoy rising to the challenge. For example, in one fast-paced English lesson for Year 5 pupils, the task was to write the opening sentence of a story, stimulated by a picture shown on the interactive whiteboard. The teacher’s searching questioning elicited high quality replies from the pupils who showed they understood such sophisticated concepts as atmosphere and the importance of dramatic opening lines to capture the reader’s curiosity. The pupils were then set the challenge of evaluating their partners’ sentences, which they did in a mature way, balancing strengths and areas for development constructively and thoughtfully. All were able to benefit from the lesson through skilfully targeted support from both the teacher and her assistant.

Pupils are polite, friendly and confident. Their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development arises from the strong Christian ethos which permeates all aspects of the school and leads to all members valuing and respecting the views of others. Pupils feel completely safe in school, and fully understand the importance of taking regular exercise and eating a healthy diet. Even the very youngest children were able to explain to inspectors that, as one commented, ‘Bananas are good for you but chocolate isn’t healthy.’ Pupils make an excellent contribution to their own and the wider community, for example, by serving as peer supporters to sort out any mild playground disputes or by fund-raising for the school council. Pupils acquire a very firm grounding in their personal development and basic skills, and this prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage of schooling.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

1

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Taking into account:	1
Pupils' attainment ¹	
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers know their pupils thoroughly and are well respected by them. A typical comment from one pupil was, 'I like it that you feel free to share your problems with the teachers.' The teachers manage the pupils' behaviour well, ensuring that they pay close attention. They use questioning skilfully to stimulate pupils to think for themselves, and encourage them to discuss tasks with one another, so that they are usually fully engaged. The pace of learning is generally brisk, but occasionally slows, so that the pupils' attention then flags and they are not sufficiently challenged to do their best work. In most lessons, however, teachers plan well and use stimulating and varied approaches confidently to suit the needs of each individual. For example, in one ambitious Year 2 mathematics lesson on how to create Carroll diagrams, pupils were encouraged to undertake their own research, sharing their ideas with one another in groups, and then presenting their findings to the whole class. This lesson caught the imagination of the pupils, and the groups were carefully selected so that each child received a suitably demanding level of challenge. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to assess the quality of their own work, and this helps them to find out for themselves how to improve. Marking is consistent and thorough, offering helpful guidance to pupils on the next steps they need to take. Teaching assistants give good support, enabling pupils, whatever their aptitudes or needs, to make good progress.

Pupils receive a thorough grounding in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology from the balanced and creative curriculum. They appreciated taking part in the Samuel Pepys event, in which they imagined themselves to be alive in the diarist's time, and one pupil commented that he loved such opportunities because, in his words, 'It lets your imagination run wild.' The

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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curriculum is exceptionally well planned to meet the needs of all groups in the school. For example, the quality of boys’ writing was raised through the topic of castles, which stimulated them to write scrolls and thus to develop a love of writing. The pupils enjoy the many exciting clubs and activities provided by the school, and acquire a high level of proficiency in French and music.

Pupils receive exemplary care. Those with a range of additional needs, including those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable, are given outstanding support, and in many cases catch up with their classmates. Parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities reported that they could not speak highly enough of the support their children receive. A parent of one pupil commented, ‘The staff go out of their way to ensure that my child is not treated differently or left out.’ This is the case with all pupils, and each individual is known and valued. For example, in the Friday lunchtime celebrations of good behaviour, led by the midday supervisors, almost all the children joined in the dancing and singing. The few shy children who did not want to join in were not neglected. The adults, unprompted, gave them attention and gently encouraged them to take part. Transition arrangements are exemplary at each stage of pupils’ schooling. For example, children move confidently from the Early Years Foundation Stage into Year 1, because Year 1 activities continue to be play-based while offering them such challenging tasks as making ‘mind maps’ to plan their writing.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

‘An excellent school, very well managed by the headteacher, with enthusiastic and happy members of staff.’ This and similar comments from parents and carers reflect the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and her team, and their continual pursuit of excellence. The governing body shares their determination to maintain the school’s exceptional qualities, and provides outstanding support. Governors are fully engaged in the life of the school and are ready to take the initiative in making improvements, for example by playing an active part in the school’s planning. As a result of the leaders’ outstanding ambition and drive for improvement, pupils’ achievement and the quality of the curriculum have improved since the last inspection, as has the Early Years Foundation Stage. The leaders’ excellent management of the quality of teaching has ensured that the proportion of outstanding lessons is now higher than at the time of the previous inspection. The school promotes equality of opportunity exceptionally well. It tackles discrimination

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by removing barriers to learning. For example, it uses a range of additional adults, including senior leaders, to support different groups, so that all pupils have the chance to succeed. Consequently, achievement is outstanding for all groups. Leaders and managers ensure that safeguarding procedures are exceptionally robust and that pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Staff are very well trained in child protection procedures and all adults are thoroughly checked and vetted before working in the school.

The school promotes community cohesion exceptionally well. It ensures that pupils have an excellent understanding of many faiths and ways of life in local, national and global contexts, and evaluates the quality of the provision stringently. The school works in excellent partnership with a number of outside organisations, opening opportunities for pupils in the arts, music, business and sport. Leaders and managers work in extremely effective partnership with parents and carers, keeping them fully informed about their children’s progress, for example through the ‘brain books’ of the younger pupils and through interactive computer programs.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

As a result of excellent teaching and care, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make outstanding progress in their learning and personal development. Children arrive in the Nursery with various levels of language and number skills but which are generally above those expected for their age. Careful and well-planned induction arrangements ensure that they quickly settle in. By the end of Reception, most children have acquired skills that are well in advance of those of their age group. The school builds and maintains excellent relationships with parents and

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carers. The environment is highly stimulating. Much is expected of the children, both in choosing their own activities and in concentrating on what the adults are showing and teaching them. They respond to these high expectations with enthusiasm. One little girl told inspectors that she loved ‘playing, making good choices, being safe and being friendly’. The children hugely enjoy learning, and are happy and confident. This is because the adults know all the children very well and meet their needs quickly. In this safe and supportive environment, the children develop excellent personal qualities. The school takes great care to ensure that their sense of wonder and awe is fully developed, for example through morning prayers. As a result, they behave exceptionally well, and are ready to share and take turns.

The children’s progress is regularly assessed, and this information is used extremely effectively to address their individual needs. Teaching by all the adults is excellent and the level of challenge is high. For example, phonics teaching, the sounds that letters make, is imaginative and the multi-sensory approach captures the children’s imagination and ensures that they do not lose interest. No opportunity is missed to develop all six areas of learning in the well-resourced indoor and outdoor play areas. For example, the baby clinic role play area takes advantage of the children’s natural interest in babies to develop their communication and numeracy skills when they weigh the ‘babies’. Leaders and managers plan the curriculum and manage the provision exceptionally well.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who returned questionnaires was higher than usual. All those who returned questionnaires, or who spoke to inspectors, agreed that the school keeps their children safe. Inspectors found that safeguarding is indeed exemplary. Almost all agreed that their children enjoy school and that they are well taught. The findings of the inspection are that pupils do, indeed, enjoy school and that the quality of teaching is good. Very few parents and carers expressed concerns, and almost all agreed that they are happy with their children’s experience at the school. A typical comment from one parent was, ‘My child told us that he does not want holidays, because he wants school every day!’

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Cecilia’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 219 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 487 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	170	78	46	21	1	0	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	181	83	38	17	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	132	60	76	35	5	2	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	129	59	84	38	4	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	163	74	54	25	0	0	1	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	132	60	81	37	3	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	160	73	58	26	0	0	1	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)	140	64	73	33	0	0	1	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	142	65	71	32	2	1	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	123	56	85	39	5	2	1	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	108	49	103	47	3	1	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	151	69	64	29	1	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	166	76	52	24	0	0	1	0

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



17 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cecilia's Catholic Primary School, Sutton SM3 9DL

Do you remember when four inspectors came to your school recently to watch you learn and play? Thank you for making us so welcome, and telling us your views. Here are some of the things we found during our visit.

You are fortunate to go to an outstanding school. It has been getting better and better in recent years, thanks to the hard work and dedication of your headteacher and all the adults. You take the Christian ethos of your school very much to heart. You behave extremely well and are kind to one another.

You enjoy learning and are given many exciting things to do. You do extremely well in your school work, and this is because the adults encourage you to do your very best. Your school keeps you very safe, and you have many chances to eat healthily and take exercise. All the adults take really good care of you.

You told us how much you enjoy school and how the teachers help you and make learning fun. We have asked all your teachers always to give you tasks that challenge you to do your best, so that all of you learn as much and as rapidly as possible.

We were impressed by how much care you take of one another, and we shall not quickly forget your enthusiasm in celebrating the achievements of your fellow pupils through song and dance at Friday lunchtimes!

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Natalia Power
Lead inspector

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