

Saint Charles' Catholic Primary School, Measham, Leicestershire

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120212
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	379980
Inspection dates	27–28 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	126
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Foster
Headteacher	Frances Smith
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who visited 10 lessons taught by five teachers. Inspectors spoke with staff, parents and carers, the Chair of the Governing Body and groups of pupils. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work, the analysis of the tracking of pupils' progress, attendance records, school policies and procedures, school leaders' monitoring records, school planning and risk assessments. They also analysed the questionnaires received from 39 pupils, five staff, and 68 parents and carers.

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

- Is progress for boys and girls of all abilities consistent across the school and what accounts for any variation?
- Why have pupils left Year 6 showing less progress than might be expected in mathematics?
- Do leaders and the governing body have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development, and how effective have been the measures they have taken to drive improvements?

Information about the school

This school is smaller than average. The large majority of pupils are White British. At around 10%, the largest minority group is Eastern European, including a number of pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is low overall, but the percentage at school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is average. Of these, most have dyslexia or speech and language delay. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. Pupils are mostly taught in mixed-age classes. At the time of the inspection, the majority of pupils in Years 5 and 6 were away on a residential trip accompanied by two of the teachers.

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

3

Main findings

Saint Charles' Catholic Primary provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is a school with a number of important strengths. As parents and carers confirm, their children greatly enjoy school. Not least because they are looked after well, pupils have an impressive understanding of how to keep safe, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, and they learn to be articulate, confident and caring young people who take a keen interest in the wider world. However, although pupils are eager learners, well motivated by a curriculum that they find stimulating and fun, their academic progress is only satisfactory. Pupils do not fully capitalise on the good start they get off to in Reception. Pupils' attainment in the Year 6 national tests is broadly average but these results have represented underachievement in the past because pupils have attained considerably less well in the tests than in teachers' assessments. This has particularly been the case in mathematics, where progress to the end of Year 6 has been much slower than expected in the years since the last inspection.

Nevertheless, the picture is an improving one. Teachers have responded positively to constructive feedback from the headteacher's lesson observations, so that progress is good in an increasing proportion of lessons. Teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than better because there remains variation in practice between classes. Leaders' observations have sometimes given an overly positive view of the effectiveness of lessons because they have focused on the features of teaching rather than on the progress that all groups of pupils are making. This overly positive view has extended to leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness. The school's capacity for improvement is satisfactory, however, because of the school's track record in maintaining pupils' strong personal development, and because leaders have succeeded in narrowing the attainment gap that had previously opened up between girls and boys.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the summer term 2012, raise attainment in English and mathematics so that pupils all demonstrate the good progress in the national tests that teachers' assessments show they are capable of making, by:

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- ensuring that pupils are adequately prepared for answering questions under test conditions
 - finding more opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics
 - providing parents and carers with timely information on how mathematical operations are taught so that they can better support their children's learning
 - checking on the progress each pupil is making twice-termly rather than through termly progress meetings
 - giving all pupils the clear guidance through marking in mathematics and other subjects that they mostly have in English.
- By the end of the spring term 2012, accelerate pupils' progress in lessons, so that it is consistently good or better, by ensuring that:
- lessons always extend pupils' learning so that those of all abilities are helped to build on what they know and have learnt before
 - pupils are always reminded during lessons of their learning objectives and the success criteria for which they should be aiming
 - pupils are routinely expected to check and evaluate their own and each other's work, including their spellings, punctuation and grammar
 - time is earmarked for pupils to read, reflect on and respond to the comments teachers make when they mark their work.
 - pupils' feedback responses in lessons are recorded so that there is always follow up when a pupil indicates that they are unsure about their learning
 - teaching assistants always have an active role during whole-class teaching
 - leaders' monitoring of lessons is sharply focused on pupils' learning and rates of progress.

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

With small numbers in each year group, there is some variation from year to year, but children join the school with skills and capabilities that are generally in line with those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Reception Year so that attainment by the start of Year 1 is above average. This above average attainment has not always been reflected in attainment in the Year 2 assessments. Year 6 test results indicated much slower than expected progress in mathematics in both 2010 and 2011. In 2011, English test scores were also depressed by the low proportion of boys attaining the nationally expected Level 4. The school attributes pupils' apparent underachievement to their unfamiliarity with answering questions under test conditions. Leaders recognise that, though they are anxious to avoid 'drilling' pupils for the tests, pupils must not in future be left insufficiently prepared for them. The school's tracking data shows current pupils making better progress through Key Stages 1 and 2, and generally making better progress in lessons, so progress and achievement are satisfactory. A new strategy this term of starting mathematics lessons with practical problem-solving activities has reduced the time spent listening passively to the teachers' introduction. Where this is followed, it means that pupils

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quickly get on with work that they find interesting and challenging. In a mixed Years 3 and 4 lesson, pupils eagerly rose to the challenge set them and they made good progress because each ability group was given discrete learning objectives and success criteria. This contrasted with less successful lessons, where pupils were unsure about what they should be learning or even, in some cases, what the teacher expected them to do.

Dyslexic pupils and those with speech and language delay benefit from well-tailored support that helps them to make progress that is at least in line with their peers. Some of the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress that exceeds that of similar pupils in other schools. Pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress, and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals also make better progress than their equivalents in other schools. That pupils with additional learning needs do relatively well is due to the good quality of care, guidance and support at this school. This has also reduced absence rates among those pupils with previously persistent absence, although attendance remains average overall. Coupled with their broadly average literacy and numeracy skills at the end of Year 6, pupils' average attendance prepares them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Among the features that stand out at Saint Charles' are the excellent relationships between pupils throughout the school. Pupils treat each other with kindness and respect, and that contributes strongly to their growing confidence and self-esteem. Pupils' interest in the wider world is stimulated by internationally themed topics, such as the recent focus on Africa. A short presentation in assembly on the need for aid to provide access to fresh water in parts of Africa prompted one pupil to muse about water that 'we take it for granted'. Older pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to take on responsibilities, for example as play coaches, organising playground sports. The junior road safety monitors help to teach younger pupils how to keep safe when out and about. As a result, pupils are exceptionally safety conscious. They have a good understanding of the importance of regular exercise and a healthy diet, to the extent that some parents and carers complain that their children become overzealous 'five-a-day' advocates.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1

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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The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

There is much good teaching at Saint Charles' but variability remains. Although work is usually matched to pupils' different abilities in the core subjects of English and mathematics, this is not always the case in other subjects. Often pupils of widely different abilities are given identical worksheets to complete, which means insufficient challenge for the more able. Teachers use techniques such as pupils signalling with a 'thumbs up' to show if they have understood but, where this was seen, no note was taken by the teacher or a teaching assistant of any that signal that they are unsure. Although teaching assistants are usually well deployed in lessons, supporting assigned groups of pupils alongside the teacher, their skills are not always utilised during periods of whole-class teaching. Marking varies in quality. The most effective, mostly in English, gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work. Other marking can sometimes be merely congratulatory. Where teachers' marking poses questions to pupils, these are not always answered. It is only in some subjects where time is routinely set aside for pupils to read and respond to teachers' comments. There are some examples of pupils checking their own and each other's work but this is not consistent even within individual classes. Too often pupils hand in work with spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors that could be avoided if they had checked the work through first, either individually or with a partner.

A key reason for pupils' enthusiasm for school is the way learning is organised into topics that capture their imagination and help to make learning memorable and fun. The topics also contribute to the broadening of pupils' horizons, as, for example, when a keen group of girls learnt Indian dancing and performed their routines confidently to the school, dressed in authentic garb. There are strong cross-curricular links between subjects that particularly reinforce literacy as pupils write in subjects other than English. By contrast, there are fewer such opportunities for giving practical application for numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics. Welfare arrangements ensure that children quickly settle into school routines and that they feel happy and safe. They have resulted in improvements in the attendance of those with previously high rates of absence and have ensured that pupils with additional learning needs achieve at least as well as their peers, with some doing rather better, especially those learning English as an additional language.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders have been successful in achieving the school's key aims in helping pupils to become well-rounded young people. It is academic progress that has not been as strong, in part because leaders' analysis has sometimes given them an inflated picture of how well pupils are doing. Termly meetings review each pupil's progress, but this is not frequent enough to nip any underachievement in the bud. By contrast, one of the reasons those learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities often make faster progress than their peers is that their progress is monitored more frequently. Equal opportunities are promoted satisfactorily. Although, in the past, boys have done notably less well than girls, initiatives to engage boys' interest have helped to narrow the gap. In a Key Stage 2 class, for example, mathematical functions are described as 'powers' on a display featuring Superman. More-able pupils are not always challenged enough when all in the class are given similar worksheets to complete.

Strategic planning identifies appropriate priorities but the absence of measurable success criteria limits leaders' and the governing body's use of the school improvement plan as a tool in driving improvement. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is supportive but, as the Chair acknowledges, it has not had enough understanding of how to interpret school performance data to challenge leaders over attainment and rates of progress. The governing body has been successful in ensuring that arrangements for safeguarding meet regulatory requirements. The school's good promotion of community cohesion is evident in the topics that feature communities and ways of life around the globe and which prompt pupils to want to get involved in helping those who are less fortunate. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well together and the school functions as a friendly, harmonious community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3

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The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children have already settled into the school's orderly routines. They make good progress because they greatly enjoy the wide range of activities on offer in both the inside and outside area, all of which help them to learn through highly purposeful play. During the inspection, activities were imaginatively organised around a Halloween theme, with staff inventively finding relevant links to all areas of learning. A group working with the teacher to practise recognising letters and the sounds they make were using a 'magic wand' to pick magnetic letters out of a 'pumpkin' container. They sounded them and put them together to sensibly determine whether they were 'trick' (non-words) or 'treat' (words). Plans in this well-run provision indicated that children were expected to build on this learning in the next session by having a go at writing the letters. Adults mostly use questioning well to draw out thoughtful responses from the children, although, just sometimes, adults answer their own questions before the children have a chance to respond.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

Views of parents and carers

An above average proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Parents and carers express generally positive views about the school but several would like to see better communication between school and home, and would like more opportunities to discuss their child's progress with teachers. Some would like more detailed guidance on how they can help their children learn at home. As one parent explained, 'I want to help with his mathematics but I can't because I do not know how he is being taught division.' Inspectors found satisfactory arrangements for keeping parents informed but raised parental concerns with the headteacher, who has undertaken to review school/home communications.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Saint Charles' Catholic Primary School, Measham, Leicestershire 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 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 126 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	68	22	32	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	47	69	16	24	3	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	33	49	25	37	4	6	3	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	50	29	43	2	3	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	31	46	31	46	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	28	41	28	41	7	10	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	54	29	43	0	0	2	3
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)	36	53	21	31	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	33	49	25	37	7	10	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	49	25	37	6	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	44	24	35	7	10	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	36	53	24	35	4	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	42	62	19	28	4	6	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 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.



31 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Saint Charles' Catholic Primary School, Measham, DE12 7LQ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Saint Charles' is giving you a satisfactory education because the teaching is helping you to make satisfactory progress and reach average standards in the Year 6 national tests. Your teachers' assessments show you ought to be doing better, especially after the good start the children get in the Early Years Foundation Stage. We agree. We were impressed with how sensible and exceptionally well behaved you are, and how eager you all are to learn and do well. We have therefore suggested some ways in which you can be helped to show the good progress in the national tests of which we know you are capable. We could see that progress sometimes varies from class to class. Teaching and teachers' use of assessment are satisfactory, and we could see recent improvements. We have suggested some further practical steps to be taken over the coming year to help you make consistently good progress in lessons. You can help by always taking care to check your work before handing it in, and by doing your best to follow the advice teachers give you when they mark your work.

Several of you told me that you particularly liked the way teachers make the curriculum interesting and fun. It is this that helps to motivate you to work hard. The good curriculum and arrangements for your welfare also contribute to your outstanding personal development and your excellent understanding of how to keep safe, including when out and about on the roads.

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful, and my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward
Lead inspector

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