

Divine Saviour Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117485
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379429
Inspection dates	17–18 November 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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Declan Lombard
Headteacher	Philip Gibbs
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2009
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who visited 15 lessons taught by 12 teachers. Inspectors spoke with staff, parents and carers, members of the governing body, local authority advisers 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 98 pupils, 18 staff, and 63 parents and carers.

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

- How effective has the school been in narrowing the gender gap between girls' and boys' achievement in mathematics?
- Are progress and rates of learning consistent throughout the school for pupils of all abilities, including the more able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities?
- Have leaders and the governing body done enough to minimise the impact of staff and leadership changes on pupils' progress and on school improvement?

Information about the school

This is an average-sized school. The large majority of pupils are White British, with around 20% coming from various minority ethnic backgrounds. A below-average proportion of pupils are learning English as an additional language; very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the percentage with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Of these pupils, the largest group have speech and language delay. Divine Saviour has a bronze Eco-schools and an Investor in People award. It also has Healthy Schools status. Since the last inspection, there have been many changes of both teaching and leadership staff.

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

This school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The last inspection reported on difficulties the school had had in recruiting staff, including those with leadership responsibilities. This has continued. The many changes of teaching staff have taken their toll. High staff turnover has led to variation in the quality of teaching, and in teachers' use of assessment and marking, all of which have slowed pupils' progress. Whereas pupils' progress was judged to be good in the last inspection, it is now satisfactory in the Early Years Foundation Stage, as well as in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils attain broadly average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Not all more-able pupils make as much progress as they should because they are not always challenged enough. Girls' attainment in mathematics plateaus in Key Stage 2 and they do markedly less well in this subject than boys because not enough is done to maintain their interest. Opportunities are missed for girls and boys to use and apply their numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics. It is this, and an over-reliance on dull worksheets, that mean that an otherwise stimulating curriculum is no better than satisfactory.

Where this school has had particular success is in inculcating a strong sense of community among its pupils. Girls and boys enjoy taking on responsibility and, around the school and in the great majority of lessons, they are attentive and well behaved. As one boy explained, 'We learn to be kind to others'. This is a caring school where pupils are generally well looked after so that they feel safe and develop a good awareness of how to keep safe and healthy. The guidance and support they receive are satisfactory, however. There have been notable successes for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, but not all of these pupils make as much progress as they could. This is due to variability in the quality of support for these pupils in lessons and the extent to which work is matched to their specific learning needs. When all in the class are given the same or very similar work to do, it is not only too easy for the more able, but often also too demanding for lower attaining pupils and for some of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Parents and carers criticise leaders and the governing body for not doing more to stabilise staffing. Although the staffing turbulence is outside the school's direct control, not enough is done to minimise its adverse impact on pupils' learning and on school improvement. Management systems ensure the smooth running of the school with, for example, comprehensive information provided to parents and carers through the school website. However, points identified for development are not always chased up with rigour to ensure improvements are implemented.

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Nevertheless, the headteacher and leadership team have a very accurate view of the school's effectiveness and of the improvements needed, based on regular monitoring. Together with their success in maintaining pupils' positive attitudes to learning despite the many staffing difficulties, this shows the school's satisfactory capacity to improve.

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 end of the summer term 2012, raise attainment and accelerate girls' and boys' progress in lessons by:
 - ensuring that the objectives set out at the start of each lesson are sharply focused on what the pupils are expected to learn
 - always setting work that helps pupils of all abilities, including the more able, to build on what they know and which extends their learning
 - fully utilising lesson time so that pupils all work at a good pace
 - reducing the reliance on worksheets and giving pupils more opportunities to use and apply what they learn in literacy by writing in other subjects
 - better engaging the interest of girls in mathematics and devising more cross-curricular opportunities for pupils to give practical application to their numeracy skills.
- By the end of the spring term 2012, improve the effectiveness of assessment by:
 - making full use of assessment information to plan and deliver work that is appropriately matched to pupils' different capabilities, including to challenge the more able and fully meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - working together within the school, and with staff in neighbouring schools, to ensure that teachers' assessments are all accurate and reliable
 - ensuring that spelling and punctuation errors do not go uncorrected
 - giving pupils clear guidance through marking that consistently shows them what they need to do to improve their work in all subjects.
- By the start of the summer term 2012, increase the effectiveness of management arrangements and mitigate the disruptive impact of staff changes by:
 - strengthening induction arrangements for new staff to ensure continuity for pupils whenever there is a change of teacher
 - developing succession planning so that staff shadow each other's subject leadership and other management roles
 - rigorously following up with teachers the points for development identified through leaders' monitoring to ensure that improvements take place.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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Standards have fallen since the last inspection. From starting points that are average, pupils make satisfactory progress. Along with their average attendance, pupils’ average key skills mean that they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education. However, boys’ better numeracy skills mean they are better prepared than girls. In recent years, fewer pupils have attained the higher Level 3 in the Year 2 assessments or Level 5 in the Year 6 national tests. This reflects the lack of challenge for more-able pupils in those lessons where work is insufficiently matched to pupils’ different capabilities and prior learning. In a Key Stage 1 science lesson, pupils enjoyed hunting the classroom for torches and other ‘light sources’ but, though they had fun, more-able pupils, in particular, learnt little that they did not already know. By contrast, Year 6 pupils made good progress in learning about erosion in geography in a lesson made memorable by the teacher arriving for the lesson acting in role as her ‘cousin’, dressed in hiking gear to demonstrate the impact of coastal erosion on different rock and sand formations. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the small number learning English as an additional language generally make similar progress to their peers. That is also the case for pupils with speech and language delay, and others with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, these pupils’ learning slows in lessons where, for example, they are given insufficient guidance and support for their writing.

Pupils’ good behaviour and sensible attitudes contribute positively to their learning. They are keen to earn rewards, including as ‘class of the month’. They treat each other with respect and their compassion for those in less fortunate circumstances is shown in the enthusiasm with which they approach charity fundraising. The many opportunities pupils have to take on responsibilities, including as prefects in Year 6, also contribute to their strong sense of community.

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	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
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	3

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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contribute to their future economic well-being	
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' planning does not always take enough account of assessment information to cater fully for the range of ability and prior learning in each class. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can do. This sometimes results in pupils working at too slow a pace or completing work that merely repeats what they already know. 'Talk partners' are used well because teachers ask pupils to report back to class on what their partner has told them, so promoting good listening skills. Although teachers almost invariably share 'learning objectives' with pupils at the start of each lesson, too often these merely set out the tasks pupils are expected to complete rather than what it is that the pupils are expected to learn. This limits opportunities for pupils to gauge their learning, and so means that pupils are not as aware as they should be of the progress they are making. Information to pupils through marking has improved, however, as a result of a key focus by school leaders and regular monitoring of pupils' books. Pupils are now more often given feedback on what they need to do to improve their work, especially in English. In the best marking, teachers enter into a genuine dialogue with pupils, posing them questions and with the pupils writing their response. This is not a consistent feature of all marking. Work is not so comprehensively marked in all subjects, and not all teachers are rigorous enough in correcting spelling and punctuation errors. Some too readily shower pupils in praise for work that is of mediocre quality and which shows only moderate effort.

Special themed weeks have added stimulus to the curriculum. For example, the recent 'forensic science' week gave a practical application to pupils' learning and captured their imagination. Letters and the sounds they make (phonics) are being taught in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, although teachers do not always model sounds accurately. Where pupils are given worksheets or templates to complete, these limit opportunities for pupils, and especially the more able, to present information in their own words and to reinforce their literacy skills. Arrangements for pupils' welfare are good, including, for example, for the many with allergies. Some pupils in potentially vulnerable circumstances have been very well supported to achieve well academically, but the quality of support for pupils with additional learning needs remains too variable. The breakfast club run by the school each morning for pupils at this and a neighbouring school is valued by parents and carers and provides those who attend with a healthy start to their day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Changes of leadership due to staff sickness and maternity leave have meant several of those with key leadership responsibilities are at an early stage in taking the reins. Past difficulties which, for example, meant it took more than two years to appoint a deputy headteacher, have also set back leadership and management at this school. The gaps in leadership have been outside the school's direct control. However, not enough has been done by leaders and the governing body to mitigate the negative impact of this and the various changes of teaching staff through, for example, comprehensive induction arrangements for new staff and sharing of subject leadership roles to ensure continuity. The headteacher now makes more frequent checks on how well pupils are doing, but the tracking of pupils' progress is reliant on the accuracy of information provided by each class teacher. There has been some internal moderation of teachers' assessments and some sharing of this across other local schools and with the local authority, but leaders agree that more could be done to assure their accuracy.

The governing body is supportive and has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It is involved in judging the 'worthy work' initiative aimed at raising pupils' expectations. Its members acknowledge, however, that it has not done all that it could to ameliorate the disruption to learning and school improvement caused by the school's longstanding recruitment difficulties. The governing body ensures that arrangements for pupils' safeguarding meet government requirements. Community cohesion is promoted well by leaders, who have a good understanding of the impact of the school's work; for instance, pupils take a keen interest in different beliefs and ways of life in this country and overseas. The school is a harmonious community where pupils from different backgrounds work, play and get on very well together, but equality of opportunity is satisfactory rather than better because there remains a gap in the attainment of boys and girls in mathematics and because not all more-able pupils are pushed to achieve their full potential.

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

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The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
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 are each greeted by name at the beginning of the day and exude a calm confidence which shows how well the school manages the transition from home to school and how much they enjoy their time in school. Parents and carers are not hurried out of the classroom, which also allows children to settle quickly, especially in the Nursery. The indoor and outdoor areas are well-equipped but opportunities are missed to further develop children’s independence and creativity through problem-solving and mark-making. Activities are overly directed by the adults. This means that, during the inspection, the progress seen was satisfactory rather than the good progress evident from previous years’ outcomes, which have been above age-related expectations by the end of the Reception Year. Children show that they enjoy their time together and play cooperatively and safely. Children behave well and relate well to the adults. A new initiative of a weekly time for parents, carers and grandparents to listen to readers is popular with both parents and children alike. ‘Learning Journey’ folders give parents and carers the opportunity to judge how well their child is progressing against the national expectations. However, these do not show parents how to develop their child’s learning at home or what the next steps are in that development. Current leadership arrangements for the Early Years Foundation Stage are temporary because the substantive post-holder is on maternity leave.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers express mixed views about the school. Although the large majority are satisfied with the school, with many voicing praise, a significant minority are unhappy with various aspects, including the management of behaviour and the

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leadership of the school. Inspectors saw good behaviour and positive attitudes from pupils to learning. Pupils confirmed that any misbehaviour or bullying was dealt with effectively. Inspectors judge leadership and management to be satisfactory, but identified some ways in which it could be made more effective, including in tackling parents' and carers' concerns over the impact of staffing instability.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Divine Saviour Roman 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 63 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 227 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	70	16	25	0	0	3	5
The school keeps my child safe	46	73	14	22	1	2	2	3
The school informs me about my child’s progress	26	41	30	48	5	8	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	46	27	43	4	6	3	5
The teaching is good at this school	28	44	27	43	8	13	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	33	52	24	38	6	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	65	17	27	1	2	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)	31	49	20	32	6	10	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	31	49	26	41	1	2	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	46	19	30	5	8	6	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	52	18	29	7	11	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	32	51	19	30	3	5	5	8
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	36	57	20	32	3	5	4	6

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 8 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.



21 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Divine Saviour Roman Catholic Primary School, Abbots Langley, WD5 0HW

Thank you for welcoming us to your school when we came to visit recently. Divine Saviour is providing you with a satisfactory education. You make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stages 1 and 2 to reach average standards by the end of Year 6. Girls are not doing as well as the boys in mathematics, and not enough of you are attaining Level 3 in the Year 2 assessments and Level 5 in the Year 6 national tests.

All this means that you are not doing as well as pupils did when the school was last inspected. The key reason for this is the disruption caused by the many changes of staff. While the headteacher and governing body can do little to ensure staffing is more stable, we have identified some ways in which they could improve management systems and reduce the adverse impact of staff changes.

We were pleased to see how well you behave and how very well you all get on with each other. It is this that makes your school such a friendly, happy place to be. You enjoy taking on responsibilities and learning about other cultures and beliefs. You also enjoy it when the school offers interesting themed weeks, like the 'forensic science' week earlier this year. Staff look after your welfare but you are not all given as much guidance as you could be, including on how to improve your work. We have suggested some ways of strengthening assessment and marking. This is something you can help with too by always taking care to read the comments teachers write when they mark your work, and doing your very best to follow their advice.

We have also suggested some ways in which teachers can help you all to make consistently good rather than satisfactory progress. Again, you can help by telling your teachers whenever you find the work you are given is too easy or too hard.

Thank you for being so helpful on our visit, and our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward
Lead inspector

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