

St Philip's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	114569
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	378890
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2012
Lead inspector	Andrew Saunders

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maria Padwick
Headteacher	Frances Morrison
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Andrew Saunders

Additional Inspector

Vanessa Tomlinson

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 18 lessons or parts of lessons taught by nine teachers, including sessions to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Observations totalled seven hours. Members of the inspection team met with groups of teachers, pupils and members of the governing body and spoke to parents and carers informally. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at systems to track the progress of pupils, the school's analysis of pupils' performance, records of monitoring the quality of teaching and documents recording the school's self-evaluation and procedures to keep pupils safe. Inspectors also considered the 83 inspection questionnaires returned by parents and carers during the inspection, as well as those completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. Since the previous inspection a new headteacher has been appointed, and there have been significant changes in the staffing. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is average; these pupils represent a wide range of different backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average. A very few of these pupils join the school at the early stages of learning English. In some cohorts there is a higher proportion of girls than usually seen. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average, including those on school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs. The school meets the current floor standards which are the minimum standards expected by the government for pupils' attainment and progress. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a single Reception class.

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

Key findings

- This is a good school. Since joining the school, the headteacher has ensured through effective management of performance that there is a clear focus on providing good teaching; consequently achievement has improved. It is not yet an outstanding school because some satisfactory teaching remains and, at times, adults take too much responsibility for the behaviour and progress of pupils; a few pupils find it difficult to manage this for themselves.
- After a recent dip, the attainment of pupils by the end of Year 6 has returned to previously above average levels in English and mathematics, although slightly higher in mathematics. In English, reading is stronger than writing. From their starting points, which are similar to those of other pupils their age, pupils make good progress across the school. This means that their achievement is good.
- Most teaching is good or better and includes effective assessment of pupils' understanding. Systems recording this are well developed and help teachers plan work which is appropriately challenging. Teachers and teaching assistants give pupils accurate feedback so that they know how to improve. A systematic approach to teaching the linking of letters and sounds (phonics) helps develop confident readers, but inconsistencies mean that this is not as effective in supporting writing.
- Behaviour is well managed by teachers, and pupils are keen to comply with the high expectations of the school. A few pupils find this more of a challenge, and are too reliant on reminders from adults to maintain their behaviour. Pupils enjoy the work they have to do and demonstrate good attitudes to learning.
- The strong leadership of the headteacher has accurately identified the key issues that need to be tackled and ensured that monitoring and support have brought about improvements in teaching. Leadership is increasingly well distributed so that this continues. Overall, leadership and management are good.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing within a year, particularly at Key Stage 1, by embedding best practice in phonics.
- Increase the level of independence of pupils across the school by:
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to identify their own next key steps needed to improve their work
 - enabling pupils to manage their own behaviour so that the intervention of adults is less frequent.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Lesson observations during the inspection, work in pupils' books and teachers' tracking of the performance of pupils show that pupils typically make good progress across the school. When children join the Reception class, they have levels of skills and knowledge similar to those of other children their age. Clear routines, good relationships with adults, and interesting tasks mean children develop positive attitudes to learning during the Early Years Foundation Stage. A decline in results at the end of Year 2 has been addressed and current data show that attainment is above average. While there was a dip in attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2011, data for the current cohort and work in lessons shows that they have returned to above average performance. Successful strategies to improve the attainment and progress of pupils in mathematics mean results have risen considerably. A systematic approach to teaching reading is used in the school. At the end of Year 2 and at the end of Year 6, reading skills are above average; pupils are confident reading a wide range of genres. However, occasional inconsistencies in the pronunciation of letter sounds, particularly to identify how words are spelt, mean that pupils' skills in using this knowledge to support their writing are not as strong, most notably in Key Stage 1.

The well-established tracking systems provide teachers with insight about the performance of different groups of pupils and identify any differences. The school found that in some cohorts, girls did not perform as well as boys, but this has been addressed and the gap has been closed. In the best lessons, pupils are given highly challenging work to do and enabled to get on with this as soon as they understand what is required. For example, Year 6 pupils particularly enjoyed tackling a series of mathematical puzzles and made rapid progress because they were encouraged to get on with their work quickly. Good questioning by all staff checks pupils' understanding and informs further explanations; where necessary, teachers quickly adapt the tasks pupils are doing. However, there remain some occasions when work is not as closely focused on the differing abilities and pupils are expected to sit through explanations which are not relevant to them. In these few lessons progress is not as rapid and is satisfactory.

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Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs benefit from effective support, through carefully chosen strategies. Tracking of the data, reflection about the effectiveness of each strategy, and discussion between parents and carers and the teachers, help to ensure that these pupils make good progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive good support and make good progress. Those at the early stages of learning English settle quickly and are, where possible, helped by adults who also speak the pupils' own language.

Quality of teaching

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and high expectations of what the children can achieve. Lesson observations and pupils' work show that teaching is typically good, and never less than satisfactory. Teachers use the accurate information they have about the performance of pupils to set specific targets to clarify what pupils need to do to reach the next stage in their learning. Teachers confidently use a wide range of strategies to involve pupils in developing their ideas, including talking in pairs, reflecting on what they have done, and giving each other feedback. Well-informed teaching assistants provide appropriate support and encouragement and help to ensure pupils know what they need to do next, particularly disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

In the best lessons, teachers make sure that pupils are clear about what they need to achieve. For example, Year 4 pupils enjoyed writing newspaper reports, making excellent use of the criteria they had discussed to show if they had succeeded in reaching their objectives for the task. However, in the occasional lessons where teachers spend too long explaining the tasks, pupils do not have sufficient time or opportunity to reflect on their work and are too reliant on the teachers to know if they have achieved the intended learning or not. Teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to write in different contexts across the curriculum, but pupils' spelling is constrained by the lack of consistency in the use of phonics. Marking is consistently good and gives pupils specific advice on what they need to improve. While there are opportunities to respond to this advice, it is not consistently well used. Parents and carers almost all agreed that teaching is good and inspectors agree. Opportunities to think about the world around them, to work collaboratively and to enjoy their success mean that teaching contributes well to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils enjoy being at school, as demonstrated by their attendance which is above average. Their behaviour is almost always good and they are typically considerate of others around them; their courtesy to adults is particularly impressive. This makes a very positive contribution to developing a harmonious and well-ordered environment. They listen closely to what they need to do and their good questions and enthusiasm demonstrate their good attitudes to learning, their teachers and each other. However, a very few pupils find it more difficult to keep within the high expectations

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of the school and their behaviour can present challenges, particularly in the few lessons where the pace of learning falters. Teachers manage this firmly, and pupils respond quickly to reminders about how to behave. While systems for managing behaviour are well established and implemented consistently, opportunities for pupils to develop greater independence in managing their behaviour are constrained. Most parents and carers agree that behaviour is good although a few indicated that they believe that lessons are occasionally disrupted. Scrutiny of behavioural records and discussions show that behaviour is good over time too.

Pupils are well aware of different forms of bullying, including physical, cyber- and prejudice-based bullying, and say that it seldom occurs. They are confident that it would be dealt with quickly and are aware of different ways to raise concerns with the school. The pupil play-leaders help to ensure that all pupils get along amicably during free time, although their role is limited by the time they get on duty. Pupils said that they feel safe at school, and parents and carers almost all agreed. They appreciate the recent changes to the site and feel that these have made them even safer; some parents and carers commented to confirm this view.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and other leaders across the school have developed a clear vision for the school, and ensured that there are high expectations. They work well to monitor, improve and support teaching, and middle leaders are increasingly effective in identifying the best strategies to enhance outcomes for pupils. Monitoring of teaching identifies key areas for development, although these are not always followed up rigorously to ensure that improvements have been fully implemented. Together with the members of the governing body, the headteacher is accurate in evaluating the work of the school. Based on this they carefully plan appropriate training and strategies to overcome weaknesses. As a result, the decline in results has been reversed and has returned to previous good performance. This demonstrates the school's capacity to bring about further, sustained improvement.

The curriculum provides engaging, well-organised opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and knowledge and is further enhanced by interesting trips and visits which widen pupils' views of the world around them. For example, the residential trip to France is a highlight pupils particularly look forward to, when they meet their pen pals. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children have good opportunities to choose the activities they do, as well as a range of more formal learning led by adults. Parents and carers are helped to know how they can support their children because the school has many opportunities for parents and carers to find out about the curriculum and the progress their own children are making. For example, parents and carers from the Reception class are able to participate in learning about phonics once a week. Other opportunities explain the school's approach to calculation in mathematics. Leaders ensure that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are accurately identified and their particular needs met because of the good knowledge of staff and emphasis on ensuring each pupil achieves their best. This exemplifies how the school effectively promotes equality and tackles discrimination.

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Members of the governing body, together with all staff, ensure that arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements. Almost all parents and carers agreed that their children were kept safe, and some commented positively about recent improvements to security. A small minority of parents and carers did not agree that the school responded well to their concerns. Inspectors found that the school has extensive systems for parents and carers to report any issues and that the school responds in a timely and appropriate manner. The school recognises that some parents and carers have found recent changes more difficult to appreciate.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



18 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Philip's Catholic Primary School, Uckfield TN22 5DJ

Thank you for the way you welcomed us to your school and talked to us about the work you were doing in lessons. We were very impressed with how polite you were around the school and could see that you enjoy the work the teachers give you to do. Your attendance is above average, which shows that you like being at school.

We have judged that St Philip's is a good school. The teachers have worked hard to make sure that they know how well you are doing, and use this information to give you work to do that challenges you. They ask searching questions to check how well you understand and give you more explanation if you need it. In the best lessons, they let you get on with your work as soon as you are ready to.

Although it is a good school, the headteacher and other staff want to make sure it gets even better. We have asked them to do the following things.

- Help you to spell more difficult words in your writing by making sure that all the teachers use the same sounds to pronounce letters when teaching you phonics.
- Help you to be even more independent in managing your behaviour, and in deciding what you need to do next in your work.

You can help by trying to do as much of your work by yourself as you can before asking an adult for help, and by thinking about your behaviour so that teachers do not have to remind you of what they expect of you.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Saunders
Lead inspector

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