#### **INSPECTION REPORT**

# **DIVINE SAVIOUR RC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Abbots Langley

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117485

Headteacher: Mrs Elisabeth Barton

Reporting inspector: Dr Brian Male 14906

Dates of inspection: 28 – 29 February 2000

Inspection number: 189300

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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# INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 3 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Broomfield Rise

Abbots Langley

Herts

Postcode: WD5 0HW

Telephone number: 01923 265607

Fax number: 01923 291632

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Mark Cahill

Date of previous inspection: September 1996

# INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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#### PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

# **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided primary school taking pupils from three to 11 years old. It serves a wide area around Abbots angley in Hertfordshire where social conditions are mainly favourable. Most pupils start school with standards of attainment already above those usually expected. At the time of the inspection there were 199 pupils in seven classes. Eleven of the pupils were under five years old. There were a further 31 pupils attending the nursery class part-time. Four per cent of pupils are eligible for free schools which is well below the national average. Nineteen per cent of the pupils are on the special educational needs register which is in line with the national average. There are two pupils for finding English is an additional language.

#### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school where pupils make good progress. They enter school with standards of attainment already above average, and standards are well above average in English and mathematics by the time they leave at the age of 11. This represents a good level of achievement for the pupils. The good progress results from the quality of the teaching, the pupils' positive attitudes to their work, and the active support of parents. The school gives good value for money.

#### WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Pupils attain high standards in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The new headteacher has made an effective start, particularly in monitoring and evaluating the school's work.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to school and apply themselves well to their work.
- Recent initiatives, such as those in assessment and curriculum planning, are already enhancing learning.
- There has been a recent improvement in standards in information technology.
- There are close links with parents that enhance learning.

### WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

 Pupils need more opportunities for extended and creative writing, particularly at Key Stage 1.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

The school's strengths far outweigh those areas needing improvement. The above suggestion is to build on existing good provision.

#### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in September 1996. Since then standards of attainment in English and mathematics have risen significantly at the end of Key Stage 2. This has been brought about by somewell focused teaching to which the pupils respond well. Progress in the key issues raised by the last inspection has been good in all aspects: raising standards in information technology, improving the school's development plan and improving procedures for assessment.

#### **STANDARDS**

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds in 1999, based on the National Curriculum tests:

Performance	Compared with			
In:	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	В	Α	А	В
Mathematics	С	Α	А	В
Science	В	В	В	С

Key
A: Well above average
B: Above average
C: Average
D: Below average
E: Well below average

There has been a significant improvement in standards since 1996, particularly in mathematics and science. Inspection evidence shows that the school is maintaining the high standards in English and mathematics. There are more pupils with special educational needs in the present Year 6, but the underlying trend is one of improving standards. Standards in science are lower than those in English and mathematics because there is not such a close focus on the subject and assessment information is not used as effectively to support teaching. Standards in information technology have improved significantly recently.

#### PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to learning	Pupils have positive attitudes to school and apply themselves well to their work.
Conduct and relationships	Relationships are generally good across the school. Pupils are generally caring and are often very supportive of each other.
Personal development	Pupils respond well to the good opportunities they are given to tak responsibility and to take care of younger children. They are very appreciative of the opportunities offered and take their responsibilities very seriously.
Attendance	The rate of attendance is above the national average.

#### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Teaching of pupils:	Under 5	5 - 7 years	7-11 years	
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory	

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses.

In the school as a whole, 50 per cent of the teaching is good or better, ten per cent is very good and very little is unsatisfactory. This is a very positive profile. Teachers are committed to the school, and have good relationships with their pupils. There is good teaching of the basic skills of numeracy and literacy and good provision for the range of needs across the school. Teaching is particularly strong for the five to seven year olds and at the top of Key Stage 2. There are generally high expectations and a good focus on what is specifically needed to make progress.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
Quality and range of the curriculum	There is a significant focus on literacy and numeracy with a substantial proportion of curriculum time given to this. This is partly responsible for the rise in standards in these areas. The overall amount of curriculum time needs revising to ensure there is an appropriate balance.
Provision for special educational needs	Appropriate provision is made for pupils with special educational needs.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is good provision made for pupils' personal development, and developments such as the school council are very valuable. There is good provision for moral, social and cultural development. Opportunities for spiritualdevelopment are sound.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There is high standard of care, and pupils are valued as individuals.

#### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
	The new headteacher has made a good start and initiated many valuable developments to build on the school's good provision. Subject co-ordinators generally manage their subjects well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Many of the governors are new but have already developed a good overview of the school, and fulfil their responsibilities well
The school's evaluation of its	The school is taking many valuable steps to evaluate its

performance	performance and the new headteacher has adopted a rigorous approach to evaluation and the close monitoring of pupils' progress.
The strategic use of resources	The budget is allocated effectively, and the school gives good value for money.

The new headteacher has ensured a very close focus on standards of attainment, and has ensured that the school is building effectively on its provision.

#### THE PARENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved		
<ul> <li>The good quality of the teaching.</li> <li>The standards achieved by the pupils.</li> <li>The quality of care given to pupils.</li> <li>The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Some parents feel that the amount of homework given is sometimes inconsistent.</li> <li>Some parents would like to receive more information about the curriculum.</li> </ul>		

A high number of parents replied to the questionnaire and attended a meeting with the registered inspector. All were very supportive of the school. The inspection findings support all their positive feelings about the school. The school has already published a homework timetable and intends to give more information about the curriculum.

#### PART B: COMMENTARY

#### WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

#### Pupils attain high standards in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.

- 1. The school's scores in national tests for 11 year olds in English and mathematics were well above the national average in both 1998 and 1999. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Inspection evidence indicates that standards this year may not be quite so high, particularly in English, as there is a higher than usual number of pupils with special educational needs, but the underlying trend is one of maintaining high standards. Pupils enter the main school abour year olds with standards of attainment in these aspects already above average, and make good progress through the school. This results from the quality of the teaching they receive which focuses so directly on essential skills, from the pupils' own positive attitudes to their work, and from the support pupils receive from their parents.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1, as measured by national tests, have been consistently high in mathematics over the last four years. Standards in reading have varied, but have been generally above average. Standards in writing have been well above average but fell to average in 1999, and inspection evidence indicates that this year's standards are similar. This results from fewer opportunities being given for pupils to engage in sustained and creative writing within the structure of the literacy hour.
- 3. In mathematics, pupils have a good facility with number across the school. By the age of seven, pupils have already developed a good understanding of place value and recall of number facts, and can use their knowledge of multiples to locate numbers. By the age of 11, a well above average number of pupils are achieving the higher level (Level 5). In one Year 6 lesson, pupils were able to locate co-ordinates in all four quadrants and had a very good understanding of negative numbers. Skills in data handling and the understanding of shape and space are also very well developed.
- 4. In English, standards in speaking and listening are high across the school. The older pupils are able to talk confidently in a wide range of contexts. They pay close attention to what others are saying when working groups and their contributions take account of others' views. For instance, there was very good quality discussion about a passage from 'A Journey to the Centre of the Earth' when pupils were working in pairs in a Year 5 lesson.
- 5. Standards in reading are high across the school. By the age of seven, most pupils are already able to read a range of texts fluently and accurately. By 11, pupils are able to look for meaning beyond the literal and are aware of the literary devices being used. They can identify the key points of a text and use examples to support their views. This is most evident where the books studied are of a high literary quality; in some of the lessons seen, particularly at Key Stage 2, the texts used had little meaning beyond the literal and so did not extend pupils' attainment in this aspect.

6. Standards in writing are not as highas those in reading, speaking and listening. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards are in line with the national average, but below the average for similar schools. Most pupils are technically competentising grammar and punctuation correctly and spelling words accurately. It is their ability to structure longer pieces of writing and to use words for variety and interest that less well developed. In adapting to the National Literacy Strategy, the school gives fewer opportunities for pupils to practise sustained writing. By the end of Key Stage 2, writing is above average, but not as high as the other aspects of English. Again, the writing is technically competent but fewer pupils than in other aspects of English attain the higher level where writing is varied and interesting, with words used imaginatively and precisely.

# The new headteacher has made an effective start to monitoring and evaluating the school's work.

- 7. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had only been in post for just over a term and had made a good start, particularly in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. She has embarked on a formal programme of monitoring the work of classes and this had been particularly effective in focusing on the work of certain groups of pupils. This has enabled her to build up a very good overview of the educational provision the school offers, especially in terms of teaching and learning, and has put her in a very good position to be able to support the work of teachers, to offer guidance where necessary, and to ensure that the quality of provision is consistent across the school.
- 8. There has also been some effective work in evaluating the school's performance. The school's scores in national tests for seven and 11 year olds have been analysed thoroughly and related to previous performance. Other tests and assessments are used effectively to check on progress, and information from this analysis is fed into teaching. The targets set in the school development plan are now much sharper and allow progress to be evaluated much more effectively. The addition of performance indicators would make this process even more thorough.
- 9. The new headteacher is already setting a clear educational direction and demanding high standards from both staff and pupils. She has good relationships with pupils and parents, and is in a very strong position to take the school forward.

### Pupils have positive attitudes to school and apply themselves well to their work.

- 10. Across the school, pupils have positive attitudes to school and to their work. They enjoy coming to school and are interested in their lessons. These positive attitudes are significant factor in the good progress pupils make.
- 11. From an early age, pupils go purposefully about their work and show good concentration. Very young children in the nursery worked meticulously over an extended period to thread pasta 'beads' on to a string to make a patterned necklace. Even though many found this difficult they persevered and were very proud of their finished work. By Year 6, pupils are able to sustain their concentration; for instance, when listening to their teacher read an extended passage from a version of Chaucer's

- 'Pardoner's Tale'. At times, pupils show great enthusiasm for their lessons. This is particularly evident in Year 1lessons where, for instance, there was great excitement even at the introduction of an art lesson.
- 12. As well as listening attentively, pupils are always willing to get on with their written work or other set tasks. There is seldom delay or procrastination, and most pupils are keen to start and take a pride in what they do. Year 2 pupils were very keen to make up clues in a number game in a mathematics lesson, and Year 3 pupils were enthusiastic to set about their science investigations.
- 13. Pupils' positive attitudes to work are also evident in the way they encourage and support each other. For instance, in a Year 4 lesson, several pupils spontaneously called out "Well done", and "That was good", after two pupils had read a poem they had written. There is a positive ethos in which high attainment is prized and encouraged by pupils and teachers alike.

# Recent initiatives such as those in assessment and curriculum planning are enhancing learning.

- 14. The school has completed the drawing up of schemes of work since the last inspection and these have given a clearer focus to lesson planning and raised the level of challenge in lessons, and made a significant contribution to the improvement in standards at the top of Key Stage 2.
- 15. The new national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been effectively introduced and have also served to sharpen the focus of teaching and the concentration on basic skills in these areas. Teachers have adapted their methods well and are applying aspects of the methods effectively in other areas; for instance a plenary session at the end of a Year 3 science lesson reviewing what was learned. The use of the literacy strategy would be further enhanced by a more selective use of the text book and the activities it suggests, and by ensuring that teachers concentrate on one group during the guided reading session. Some of the best literacy lessons were those, such as Year 2, where teachers used other texts, devised their own activities, and stayed with one group in the group work session.
- 16. The recent initiative on assessment has been particularly effective. There has been some very good work on agreeing the levels of attainment that has involved teachers from other schools. This has been particularly valuable in developing a shared understanding of the lines of progression and what needs to be learned next in order to improve. It is the application of the assessment information to teaching and learning that has made this so successful. This is particularly evident in English and mathematics. The next step in this development would be to extend it to science and some of the non-core subjects. The introduction of the new National Curriculum in September will be a good opportunity to review the new level descriptions and the implications these hold for teaching.

There has been a recent improvement in standards in information technology.

- 17. One of the key issues of the last inspection report was to raise standards in information technology, and the school has made very good progress in this. There has been an increase in the number of computers in the school and they are being used effectively to promote learning. There is a good level of expertise amongst the teaching staff, who use the technology effectively to produce teaching and learning materials.
- 18. Even very young children have developed confidence in using computer programs. Nursery children have already acquired a good level of ability to use the mouse and this is developed well through the reception class where pupils learn to change programs and respond to the instructions. In Year 1, pupils have a very good ability to use a drawing program and can predict the effect of clicking on different icons. Year 2 pupils are able to work directly on the screen to enter and amend text, and are sufficiently skilled to be able to think about their writing rather than the mechanics of operating the program. By Year 4, some pupils are able to use a computer program to stretch text in graphics form to make a book cover.
- 19. It was not possible to see older pupils using information technology, but it is evident that standards will be well above average as the present younger pupils move through the school. The school has not yet made access to the National Grid fdrearning directly available to pupils and is intending to set up a computer suite. It needs to give careful consideration as to how such a suite would operate in order to justify the concentration of resources. The school has been relying heavily on donations and token schemes for the acquisition of equipment, and governors need to consider whether further resources from the school's budget are necessary to support this educational priority.

#### There are close links with parents that enhance learning.

- 20. A high number of parents attended the meeting with the registered inspector and responded to the questionnaire. They were overwhelmingly supportive of the school. This support has a positive effect upon pupils' progress in three ways.
- 21. Firstly, parents take a close interest and give good support to their children's work at home. Children are heard to read and encouraged to complete their other tasks in a positive way. This directly affects their learning. Some parents were concerned that the amount of homework set was sometimes inconsistent across the year groups and the year. The school has now published a homework timetable that sets out clearly the amount expected.
- 22. Secondly, parents help in school, giving direct support to the work in classes, and the very active Parent Teacher Association raises money that has supported the purchase of equipment and many valuable projects.
- 23. Thirdly, and very significantly, parents' own very positive attitudes to the school and support for its work influence the pupils' attitudes and so contribute to their progress.
- 24. The school takes many steps to foster this close relationship, and a good example is the home-school agreement and the consultation that preceded this.

#### WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Pupils need more opportunities for extended and creative writing, particularly at Key Stage 1.

- 25. Standards in writing are lower than those in other aspects of English, particularly at Key Stage 1 where scores in the 1999 national tests were average nationally, but below average for similar schools. In the past, standards have been well above average in writing. Pupils' technical skills in terms of spelling, punctuation and grammar are well developed, and it is their ability to write sustained pieces with coherent structure and words chosen for variety and interest that is not developed so well. This is mainly because less time is now given for pupils to engaged in sustained pieces of writing that give them opportunity to practise these skills. This, in turn, is partly because the structure of the literacy hour is more suited to short pieces of writing and exercises that give practice in certain skills. This is also the case at Key Stage 2, but these pupils have had more opportunity to develop their skills as they came through the school.
- 26. In order to find time for extended writing, the school needs to look at the overall allocation of time to English and other subjects. At the moment a considerable amount of time is given to English over and above the literacy hour, but in many classes this is in the form activities such as ten minutes at one time for spellings and 15 at another time for silent reading, and so does not allow time for sustained writing. The extra English activities are often those that are already the focus of the literacy hour, rather than those not covered. In some cases well over an hour is allocated to the literacy session, and this does not necessarily increase the amount of learning pro-rata.
- 27. As so much time is given to literacy and numeracy, there is relatively less time available for such subjects as history andgeography which would provide good opportunities for pupils to engage in sustained writing. Nowhat standards in English and mathematics are generally high, it might be possible to reduce the time allocated without reducing standards.
- 28. Within lessons, the balance of activities is often heavily towards teacher input with a focus on information, and there is scope for more opportunities to be created for pupils to write.
- 29. All of this is a matter of balance. The standards of writing are above average at the end of Key Stage 2 so the improvements suggested are to 'fine tune' the provision. The school already intends to review the allocation of curriculum time to subjects and to look at the timings of the school day in order to create more useful amounts of lesson time.

#### WHAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

30. To build on its many strengths, the school needs to provide more opportunities for pupils to engage in extended and creative writing, especially at Key Stage 1.

#### General

31. This is a good school where pupils make good progress and standards of attainment in English and mathematics are well above average. This does not come about by accident but is a consequence of hard work by teachers and a good professional focus on the teaching of basic skills. The school is a caring community that encourages the pupils' good attitudes and the pupils respond well to its provision. The new headteacher is already impacting very positively upon the school and has started many valuable initiatives.

# PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

# Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	27	
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	10	

# Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	11	37	48	4	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

# Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll		YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	16	197
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs		YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	38

English as an additional language	No of pupils	
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2	

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

# Attendance

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	4.3
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

# Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total	
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	13	15	28	

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	11	12
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	25	25	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89	89	93
	National	82	83	87

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	12	13
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	25	26	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89	93	96
	National	82	86	87

# Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	11	18	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
	Boys	7	10	10
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Girls	14	18	16
	Total	21	28	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	72	97	90
	National	70	68	78

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
	Boys	9	10	10
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Girls	15	18	18
	Total	24	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83	97	97
	National	68	69	75

# Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black - Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	0
Black - other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	193
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

# Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

#### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers and classes: YR - Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26.6
Average class size	28.1

#### Education support staff: YR - Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	72

#### Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.4
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	33
Number of pupils per FTE adult	6.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

# Financial information

Financial year	1998/99	
	£	
Total income	347,090	
Total expenditure	349,675	
Expenditure per pupil	1,627	
Balance brought forward from previous year	2,788	
Balance carried forward to next year	204	

# Results of the survey of parents and carers

# Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	139
Number of questionnaires returned	76

# Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	32	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	43	1	3	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	41	1	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	47	17	0	3
The teaching is good.	53	41	3	3	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	53	8	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	17	5	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	26	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	53	39	3	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	55	39	3	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	43	0	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	57	34	7	1	1