



St Pius X Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115192
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 279538
Inspection dates 22–23 November 2006
Reporting inspector John Williams HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Tennyson Road
School category	Community		Chelmsford
Age range of pupils	4–11		Essex CM1 4HY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01245 354875
Number on roll (school)	175	Fax number	01245 358926
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Pauline Akhurst
		Headteacher	Mrs Anthea Caddy
Date of previous school inspection	6 November 2000		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 22–23 November 2006	Inspection number 279538
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Pius X Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided primary school with most pupils living close to the school. The ward is one of social deprivation and pupils' attainment on entry is just below national average. There is an increasing proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals or with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average but increasing.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Pius X Catholic Primary School has seen much turmoil since the last inspection in 2000. During this period there was considerable staff change and absence of the headteacher due to ill health. A number of items important to the school's development were not dealt with and issues from the last inspection report were not systematically tackled. In 2005 an acting headteacher was appointed who has subsequently taken up the post permanently. An experienced teacher from a local school has been drafted in temporarily to fill the post of deputy headteacher. Stability is beginning to return and there has been rapid improvement in many areas. Standards have risen, albeit less so in writing. The underachievement of the more able has been dealt with. Target setting, behaviour management and improvement planning have all been addressed and this has impacted well on standards and quality.

Standards and achievement are satisfactory from the Foundation Stage to the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils enjoy a number of extra-curricular activities and the formal curriculum is developing well as work to make it more relevant to pupils with links across subjects is beginning to show promise. Though some of the teaching is good, and that in Years 5 and 6 often outstanding, a little of it is inadequate. As a result, the impact of teaching on achievement is only satisfactory overall.

Pupils' personal development is good and they enjoy coming to school. Attendance is good and above the national average. Pupils enjoy their lessons and behave well. Relationships between pupils, and between teachers and pupils are good. Pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities are supported well by teaching assistants who are a real asset to the school. There is a good focus on healthy living.

The school therefore currently has some good features. The impact of the new headteacher has been considerable in a short period of time and parents recognise the progress being made. They are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Inspectors agree with the school that its effectiveness is only satisfactory at the moment since some of the systems put in place to improve standards and quality are only just beginning to have an effect. Management's self-evaluation is very good. It is an honest and accurate reflection of strengths and weaknesses and shows that there is no complacency. However, in order to improve further the school has to address the continuing weaknesses in pupils' writing and the variability in the quality of teaching and learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing.
- Address the inconsistent quality of teaching and bring it all up to the standard of the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils join the Foundation Stage with standards that are a little below average. They are prepared soundly for learning in Year 1 so standards are satisfactory. Scores in national tests for 2006 in Key Stage 1 improved and are close to average except for writing, even though here the more able pupils did much better than in previous years.

The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard at the end of Year 6 in 2006 was, for the first time for some years, a little above average. There were more achieving the higher levels than in the past. Overall achievement is therefore satisfactory by the end of Key Stage 2, though some did not do quite as well as expected in mathematics. Here the school can clearly account for why individual pupils underachieved. Most of the current Year 6 pupils are making satisfactory or better progress towards their targets.

Across the school pupils' reading is a strength. They clearly enjoy their books and many are fluent readers. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are sound. They are independent yet cooperative learners but some find it hard to remember from one lesson to the next and this can make progress slow. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress overall and the more able and the gifted and talented are doing well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They have positive attitudes to learning; they behave well and very few have been excluded. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and minority ethnic pupils feel that their cultural heritage is respected. Pupils join in with prayers and reflection sensibly and thoughtfully. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and relate well with one another. They feel safe in school and they know the importance of avoiding danger. Pupils respond well to opportunities to take responsibility. They take seriously their membership of the class and school councils, knowing that their ideas are listened to, and they are very active in raising money for charity. The ideas pupils contributed to improving school dinners show a good understanding of healthy living, and they take part enthusiastically in sporting activities. Their progress in basic skills and the positive personal qualities they acquire stand them in satisfactory stead for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Staff know their subjects well and have high expectations of pupils' effort. Pupils are interested in learning and apply themselves well. Teachers plan their lessons

satisfactorily and set work for different groups of pupils that build on what they can already do, though lower down the school teaching challenges higher attaining pupils more effectively than it supports the less able. There is sometimes a little confusion in the planning between the activities that are to be covered and what pupils are expected to learn. Teaching assistants are used well, and teachers make very effective use of interactive whiteboards to stimulate pupils' interest. Staff have good relationships with pupils and manage behaviour well except in lessons where teaching is inadequate. In these lessons, the pace is also too fast so that pupils do not have time to reflect. Where lessons are outstanding, teachers' in-depth knowledge enables them to answer pupils' questions or deal with their errors expertly, and challenge pupils to go further through skilful summing up.

Teachers regularly assess pupils' attainment and are beginning to use this information to check their progress. Satisfactory targets in literacy and numeracy are beginning to inform teachers' planning. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities have good individual education plans. The school involves parents well as partners in their children's education. Homework makes a sound contribution to pupils' progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities. Literacy and numeracy are promoted well in Years 5 and 6 and satisfactorily in other years. A teaching programme for reading skills in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 has begun to raise standards in reading and spelling. The Foundation Stage provides a sound range of learning opportunities but the school has, rightly, identified the need to improve outdoor facilities. Links with the local Catholic secondary school are effective in supporting the learning of gifted and talented pupils, especially in mathematics and science.

Good attention is given to pupils' personal development, in the context of the school's Catholic ethos and its close links with the parish. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of clubs and special events, including termly activity weeks. Activities have included African art and music, scientific experiments, circus skills and a production inspired by the Maori culture. The school has awards for promoting physical education and pupils' awareness of healthy living.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides pupils with good care, support and guidance. Parents appreciate the care provided and most feel well informed. The school is careful in promoting pupils' health and safety and in making sure that they are protected. Pupils are confident to discuss any problems with the headteacher and there is a counsellor for those who need to talk more deeply about their feelings. There are good links with external agencies and the school is mostly effective in managing pupils' behaviour. This ensures that they learn and grow in a calm and orderly environment. The school provides pupils with good personal guidance and offers satisfactory advice about how

to improve their learning. Pupils are aware of their targets in English and mathematics and they are beginning to be involved effectively in assessing their own progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The impact of the new headteacher has been very good in a short space of time and parents are supportive of her work. Middle managers and the senior management team have been in a state of flux for some years but demonstrate they have the capacity to improve the school. For example, they have changed the curriculum and implemented effective assessment systems.

Governors now have a better view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and understanding of their role. They have been fully involved in the school's self-evaluation and are clear about their priorities for improvement. The allocation of resources is well thought out; for example, extra teaching assistants are provided for the less able groups in literacy and mathematics. Finances are well managed. There is good involvement with the Catholic secondary school, sports clubs and the local authority.

Progress since the last inspection had been slow until relatively recently but is now rapid. There is now a whole school commitment to raising standards. For example, the school is trying new ideas such as regrouping Years 5 and 6 and Years 3 and 4 together for mathematics to increase the numbers of pupils achieving their targets. Booster classes and special programmes for the more and least able are all in place. The headteacher's analysis of performance data is very good and self-evaluation is accurate and honest. It identifies clearly the strengths and areas for development. Given the improvements to date and the commitment to driving up standards and quality, inspectors agree with the school that its capacity to improve is good.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 November 2006

Dear Pupils

St Pius X Catholic Primary School, Tennyson Road, Chelmsford. CM1 4HY

Mrs Goodchild and I enjoyed meeting you when we visited your school. Thank you for making us so welcome.

We were impressed with the way you work and play together. When you are in lessons we like the way you work with each other, the teachers and teaching assistants. You seem to enjoy coming to school and you behave well.

Mrs Caddy and all the teachers and teaching assistants take good care of you. It is good to see many of you taking part in activities such as rugby, football and other clubs. We think that the food the school provides at lunchtime is very good and it was nice to see those of you who have sandwiches bringing healthy things in your lunch bags.

We really enjoyed some of the teaching, particularly in the Year 5 and 6 classes. We have asked the school to look at ways to make all teaching as good as this. The last Year 6 did better in their SATs than the year before, so hopefully the Year 6 class will try and beat this! Everyone could do better in their writing and the school will be trying to find ways of helping you do this.

We hope you will continue to work hard, do well at St Pius X Catholic Primary School, and enjoy your Christmas celebrations.

John Williams

Her Majesty's Inspector