



# St Helen's Catholic Junior School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 115293  
**LEA** ESSEX LEA  
**Inspection number** 279566  
**Inspection dates** 2 March 2006 to 2 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. Grahame Boyce LI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior	<b>School address</b>	Sawyers Hall Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		CM15 9BY
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 11		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01277213962
<b>Number on roll</b>	352	<b>Fax number</b>	01277214589
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr.Trevor Horton
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26 June 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Bozena Laraway

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector in one day. Prior to the inspection, using national data, Ofsted had identified the school as high attaining. In the course of the day visit, the inspectors met with a range of staff, pupils, governors and parents and observed the school at work. In addition a range of documentation was analysed, including 165 questionnaires from parents. All this data assisted the writing of this report.

## **Description of the school**

This is a larger than average Voluntary Aided Catholic Junior school serving a relatively favoured area in and around the town of Brentwood in southern Essex. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is below average as is the proportion with statements of learning needs. The school community is very stable and a lower than average proportion of pupils joined the school after Year 3. The head teacher took up her post at the start of 2005 and since her arrival has appointed several new staff, including a new deputy.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

This is a good school with several outstanding features that provides good value for money. Given the vision of its head teacher and the great skill of its leadership team, the school has excellent capacity for further improvement. Parents and pupils think very highly of the school and are justified in doing so. The head teacher, who has been in post for just over a year, has gained a very accurate picture of how well the school is doing and has carefully evaluated its strengths and areas for improvement. The school's view of its good overall performance matches that of the inspector. The school has maintained very high standards of attainment over recent years with pupils making good progress in their learning and outstanding progress in their personal development. A high proportion of pupils gain the higher levels in the national tests, particularly in mathematics. Achievement in English dipped slightly in 2003 and this downward trend continued in 2004. The school has responded rigorously to this challenge and has set about improving the quality of teachers' planning so that work is more closely matched to the needs of the pupils. It has also amended the content of the curriculum so that pupils are given more experience of different styles of writing and have better and more frequent opportunities to apply their writing skills in a range of different situations. As a result standards in English are now rising again. Achievement in science has also improved recently because greater emphasis is now being given to the experimental and investigational aspects of the subject. The very caring Catholic ethos of the school is an enormous strength that ensures that pupils and adults work harmoniously together in an atmosphere of mutual respect that values the contribution of each individual. Consequently, relationships between pupils and adults are excellent and pupils always know who to turn to if they need support. Behaviour is excellent. Teaching and learning are good overall, with significant strengths in planning and the innovative use of the excellent ICT resources to make learning exciting for the pupils. The school is developing, as a matter of urgency, a comprehensive system for tracking the performance of pupils as they move through the school. This will monitor pupils' progress more accurately so that clear targets can be set for all. The curriculum is outstanding overall and great care is taken to give due emphasis to all curriculum areas. The school is already working to further improve the use of information and communications technology (ICT) across the curriculum. Pupils who find learning difficult receive good support. The school has tackled the issues for improvement from the last report and has well established procedures for monitoring quality and standards and for identifying and meeting the needs of gifted and talented pupils.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enter the school with standards that are much higher than is usually found. They make good progress in all subjects and standards are even higher by the time they leave. The school has maintained very high standards over recent years and has responded very effectively to a slight dip in achievement in English over the past two years. The school rightly identified the need to give pupils even better opportunities

to write at length in many different ways. All staff have responded superbly to this challenge and set about providing pupils with lots of interesting opportunities to write at length on a range of fascinating subjects. Some of the examples of persuasive writing produced by older pupils, for example, are of very high quality. They are exceedingly entertaining and show a remarkable maturity. This strategy for improvement has proved highly successful and progress in English is now good. Greater emphasis has been given to investigative and practical aspects of science and the school further raised achievement in the subject by increasing pupils' understanding of scientific concepts and principles. Pupils who find learning difficult make good progress and pupils with statements of special educational need are provided for well. There are no significant differences in the progress made by boys and girls or different groups of pupils because the school is committed to helping all pupils to do their best. The school meets its challenging targets and effectively prepares pupils for the next stage of their education. The good progress pupils make in literacy, numeracy and ICT ensures that they have the skills needed to prepare them for the world of work.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are exceedingly well mannered and mature and are very polite to visitors and develop wonderful self-confidence. The school council represents the views of pupils superbly and has, for example, made excellent use of the money allocated to purchase playground play equipment. They are currently busy seeking a cost effective means of recycling the school's waste paper and are trying to persuade the school to allow girls to wear trousers. Pupils know about healthy eating and enjoy nutritious packed lunches and fruit snacks. They have numerous excellent opportunities to keep fit and healthy in physical education, swimming and after school sport. Pupils enjoy their lessons, and are confident that they are doing well. Despite the school's very rigorous approach to absence attendance has dipped to broadly average levels. This is mainly due to holidays taken during term time. Pupils respond exceptionally well to the many opportunities provided for them to take responsibility and complete numerous tasks with enormous pride and care. They are heavily involved in the life of the wider community and are developing an excellent appreciation of various spiritual, moral and cultural issues. Pupils raise significant sums of money for charity. Pupils have excellent social skills and are being prepared exceedingly well for the world of work. The school's excellent programme of personal, social and health education ensures that pupils know how to stay safe, leading to them acting sensibly at all times.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good and staff have excellent relationships with their pupils who, in turn, speak fondly of the care and respect they are shown by all staff. Teachers plan

interesting lessons that make learning fun and are particularly skilled in the use of ICT to make learning exciting and interactive. Teachers have worked very hard developing their planning so that the needs of all pupils are met even more accurately and this has resulted in the raising of standards in several areas, including English. Good use is made of specialist teaching in music and mathematics and results in very high standards. Older pupils are grouped by ability for their lessons in mathematics and science and higher attaining pupils are sure that this helps them to learn at an even faster rate than is possible in mixed ability classes. Systems for target setting and tracking are being established for English, mathematics and science and this is helping staff to see more clearly how well individual pupils are progressing as they move through the school. This data will also be used to let pupils know what they need to do to make their work even better. The school is committed to improving these procedures still further so that swift remedial action can be targeted on those that need it, as required.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding since it provides pupils with high quality access to all of the subjects of the National Curriculum as well as giving opportunities for them to learn French in Years 5 and 6. Careful attention is paid to maintaining a balance in the time allocated to each subject and particular emphasis is given to ensuring that pupils are given weekly opportunities for PE, games and swimming. There is a comprehensive programme to develop pupils' awareness of personal, social and health issues and pupils know how to keep fit, safe and healthy. The school is working well to further develop the already good cross-curricular links between subjects and provides numerous good opportunities for pupils to use and apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in a range of different contexts. In addition to a wide range of sporting and musical opportunities and an annual residential experience, there is an extensive range of extra-curricular events provided before school, during the lunch period and after school which are very well attended by the pupils. The school has got fantastic grounds, excellent facilities, including a beautiful swimming pool and specialist teaching rooms for ICT, music and science and is very well equipped.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The quality of care is outstanding. Great emphasis is placed on the quality of the relationships between adults and pupils and this helps to promote purposeful learning and high attainment. Pupils feel very safe and secure and insist that they love coming to school because they like their teachers and learn lots of interesting things. Child protection procedures are extremely robust and fully in place. Pupils know that they can approach any adult in school if they have any worries or problems and know they will be listened to.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good overall with some aspects that are outstanding. The school has established and maintained an exceptionally caring ethos, based on its Catholic foundation, which values and nurtures everyone associated with it. These values are greatly appreciated by the parents, who consider them to be an extension of those shared in their homes. The head teacher provides the school with excellent leadership and has a very clear vision for the school. Through a rigorous system of self evaluation the school has identified those areas of the school that are working well and those that require further improvement. She quickly spotted that there had been a recent dip in the standards in English and has taken swift and decisive action to ensure that standards of achievement have returned to their previous levels. A lot of work has been done in the past year to develop the roles and responsibilities of subject managers and to enable them to provide leadership to their areas of responsibility. This is being achieved with great success and senior staff are very enthusiastic about the work they are doing and the impact they are beginning to have on the learning of the pupils. The school seeks the views of parents and pupils on how well it is doing although a significant minority of parents report that they would like to be even better informed. Governors meet their statutory requirements diligently and have very clear systems for checking how well the school is doing through programmed visits. The school has tackled the issues for improvement from the last inspection and maintained its exceptionally high standards. It is very well placed to improve further.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

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

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to inspect your school. I really enjoyed talking with you and hearing what you thought about things. This letter is to tell you what your school does well and what it could do to become even better. You are very lucky to attend your school. The headteacher and all the staff look after you very well and want the best for all of you. Teachers work very hard to make lessons interesting so that you enjoy learning. They help you with your work so that all of you make exceptionally good progress. You do very well in the tests you take at Year 6 and recently you have got so much better with your writing and when you do experiments and investigations in science lessons. Your work in ICT has improved so much and the school is now busy finding even better ways for you to practice these skills in other lessons. Those of you who find the work hard get lots of help so that you can make good progress. Your behaviour is excellent. You get on very well with each other and with the staff. Your school council does an outstanding job of telling your teachers what you think about the school and how to make it better. I have asked your teachers to carry on working at all the good ideas they have to help make your school an even better place, and to make sure that they regularly check your progress as you move through the school, and share with you how well you are getting on so that you know what your next target is.