



St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118779
LEA Medway
Inspection number 280389
Inspection dates 12 July 2006 to 12 July 2006
Reporting inspector Selwyn Ward AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Deanwood Drive
School category	Voluntary aided		Rainham
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Gillingham, Kent ME8 9NP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01634 371892
Number on roll	130	Fax number	01634 371892
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr John Ellery
Date of previous inspection	19 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Katherine Sexton

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. As in other schools in the locality, pupil numbers have fallen by more than a third over recent years. Class sizes are much smaller than average because the school has retained single-age classes even though there are fewer than 20 pupils in most year groups. The overwhelming majority of pupils are White British. They are of generally average ability when they start school. An average number of pupils have learning difficulties.

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 where pupils do well because their progress is exceptionally closely tracked and they are given support that is carefully matched to their individual needs. Pupils benefit from being taught in small classes. As a parent commented, 'my child receives more attention than she otherwise would.' However, maintaining the small class sizes is expensive and the school's running costs now significantly exceed its income. That means that although the school is effective, it only provides satisfactory value for money. Children in the Reception class are made to feel safe and develop in confidence. As a result of the good provision, they make good progress so that by the end of the year, almost all attain and many exceed all of the early learning goals expected for their age. Because teaching is good throughout the school, pupils of all abilities make similarly good progress through Years 1 to 6. They attain above-average standards by the end of Year 6. They are also helped to develop in confidence because they find the school a happy and friendly place to be. Teaching assistants provide very good support to pupils with learning difficulties but teachers do not always make the fullest use of assistants' time throughout the lessons. At times when the teacher is teaching the whole class, the assistants are, too often, passive observers. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior management team are well aware of the many strengths of the school and of those areas that need to be improved. The accuracy of their self-evaluation and, more importantly its use, is shown, in the rise in standards in writing this year. What is not as effective is the school's strategic planning. The school has not developed long-term plans for coping with the financial impact of the drop in pupil numbers. Despite this shortcoming, the good improvements since the last inspection and the very effective day-to-day management of the school show that the school has a good capacity for continued improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that financial planning and class organisation properly reflect the reality of future pupil numbers so that the school's good provision is sustainable.
- Make more effective use of teaching assistants during whole-class teaching.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and pupils achieve well in relation to their capabilities. Children in the Reception year make good progress so that almost all attain, and a great many exceed, all of the early learning goals expected for pupils of this age. In the national tests, pupils attain the ambitious targets set for them in English and mathematics. Those with learning difficulties do particularly well because they are given very effective support in the small classes. Able pupils also achieve well because they are set challenging work. Although pupils make good progress overall, the school recognises that they have not always done as well in writing and science as in reading and mathematics. The school has identified this and has this year increased

opportunities for pupils to apply and develop what they have learnt in literacy through more writing in other subjects. This has further raised standards in English. In science, the school correctly identified that pupils have not previously had enough practice in carrying out and recording their own investigations. The increased focus on science investigations is already raising standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good. The pupils are responsible, confident, caring young people. They are polite and friendly to visitors and they evidently love coming to school. This is shown by their very positive attitudes and their good attendance. Relationships are very good and pupils support each other. It was their suggestion to form a 'buddy system' at playtimes to help those who find these times difficult to handle. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. It is reflected in the generally good behaviour in lessons, in assemblies and around the school. The school helps pupils to make a contribution to their immediate and wider community through the many responsibilities they are given. Pupils take these responsibilities seriously. They also raise money for children's charities and regularly work with pupils from the nearby special school. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to live healthy lifestyles and to keep safe. They participate enthusiastically in the physical activities offered by the school, including those arranged through after-school clubs. They are proud to highlight how their school is now successfully taking part in the Medway Youth games and team competitions. Older pupils have a much better awareness of economic matters than is commonly seen in other schools. This is because they are involved in selling healthy snacks in the school tuck shop and they take part in a Young Enterprise scheme.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and pupils make good progress as a result. As one pupil reported, 'teachers try to make lessons fun and they encourage you to do better.' The small class sizes and generous ratio of staff to pupils mean that staff know each of the pupils really well. Because pupils' individual progress is closely monitored, teachers know precisely how well their pupils are doing and they match work to their different abilities. Teachers explain clearly to the pupils what they are to learn and then help them assess how well they have done by the end of the lesson. They also involve pupils in assessing the success of their own learning. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and are skilled at creating a learning environment where pupils are encouraged to think for themselves, although in science an over-reliance in some classes on worksheets inhibits pupils from making their own decisions about how best to record the results of their investigations. Teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils with learning difficulties to help them participate in the lessons and

achieve their full potential. However, teaching assistants are not always used as fully as they could be during whole-class teaching. They are often merely passive observers when they could, for example, be helping teachers by recording when pupils answer questions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The school has been successful in developing key literacy and numeracy skills through subjects other than English and mathematics. Pupils also draw well on their information and communication technology (ICT) skills in other subjects. For instance, in a Year 3 geography lesson about environmental damage, pupils were researching the Internet as well as books for facts about pollution in the local environment. This work also built on what pupils had previously learnt about the environment as part of the personal, social and health education. The range of clubs, visits and other enrichment activities is remarkably wide for a school of this size and there is a very high rate of pupil participation. Pupils spoke excitedly about the themed weeks such as 'A trip around the world,' which clearly trigger their interest and imagination.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils' care, guidance and support are outstanding. Teachers and their assistants create a happy learning environment where all pupils are valued equally and made to feel secure. As one pupil put it, 'all my friends are around me and my teachers are my friends.' Teachers provide pupils with clear and effective guidance about their work and how they can improve, both through their individual targets and through good quality marking. Following an initiative this year, marking throughout the school now consistently reinforces literacy skills in all subjects. A particularly outstanding feature is the close monitoring and analysis of each individual pupil's progress, which is followed up with action and additional support where a pupil looks like they are not doing as well as they should. Arrangements for child protection are rigorous and well monitored. Parents value the care and support their children are given and they express confidence that their children are safe at school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior management team keep a very careful track of each pupil's progress and ensure that support is given whenever any risk of underachievement is identified. This makes a strong contribution to the good progress made by the pupils. The quality of monitoring of teaching and learning is high. When lessons are observed, teachers are given clear feedback on the most effective aspects of teaching along with areas that could be improved. A similar approach is taken in the frequent monitoring of pupils' work, some of which involves

the pupils themselves. This also helps to ensure that the school's policies, for example, on marking, are consistently followed. Self-evaluation is accurate and is used effectively to promote further improvement, for example, through the focus this year on writing and investigations in science, which in both cases have resulted in improved standards. Governors are very supportive of the school. They visit regularly and report on their findings. They have a very good appreciation of standards because they are directly involved in scrutinising pupils' work. Strategic planning is not as strong, however. Other than in rough draft form, the school improvement plan does not currently extend beyond the end of this term. The governing body have set a deficit budget for next year in order to maintain single-age classes for another year despite the low pupil numbers. Although this may be feasible for a year because of the school's financial reserves, it is not sustainable in the longer term unless there is a significant increase in pupil

numbers in most year groups. Notwithstanding this shortcoming, the good improvements since the last inspection and the very effective day-to-day management of the school show that the school has a good capacity for continued improvement.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	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	2	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

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	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	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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 all for making us so welcome and helping us when we visited your school.

Here are the things that we think are best about your school

You really love your school and are rightly proud of it.

You do well in lessons.

Your teachers keep careful track of how well you are doing and give you extra support when it's needed.

The school is well run.

These are the things that we think could be better

The school cannot afford to have such small class sizes for much longer and it needs to plan more for how things will need to change unless a lot more children come to your school.

Teaching assistants could do some other jobs in the classroom while the teacher is talking to all the class together

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.

Yours faithfully,

Selwyn Ward Lead Inspector