



# Stella Maris Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 118862  
**LEA** Kent  
**Inspection number** 280413  
**Inspection dates** 11 July 2006 to 12 July 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Janet Gill AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Parkfield Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Folkestone
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Kent CT19 5BY
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01303 252127
<b>Number on roll</b>	204	<b>Fax number</b>	01303 226085
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr J Ciantar
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 January 2003	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Tony Holdsworth

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 11 July 2006 - 12 July 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 280413
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Stella Maris Catholic Primary School is located in Folkestone. Owing to the school's religious nature, children come from a very wide area. They are from predominately White British backgrounds, although recently the school has admitted a few children from minority ethnic backgrounds who are learning English as an additional language. Attainment on entry to Reception covers a wide range of abilities but overall is below average. Some children start school with low levels of social and communication skills. Around a quarter of the children have learning difficulties or disabilities, which is above average.

At the last inspection in June 2004, the school was taken out of special measures. However, at that time, the school was still required to improve the standards pupils reach.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The standard of education provided by the school is satisfactory. The headteacher's clear educational vision and strong leadership have been instrumental in improving the school and leading it out of special measures. The senior management team and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, which is based on regular evaluation. Their view of its overall effectiveness is confirmed by this inspection. The school is well placed to improve further and provides satisfactory value for money. Effective strategies have secured improvement as academic standards have risen throughout the school. For example, a stronger focus on the teaching of reading has raised standards in Year 2. Following booster classes and a structured homework programme, Year 6 pupils have achieved better results in mathematics. However, past weaknesses in provision mean that there are still gaps in the knowledge and understanding of pupils in this year group. There is still scope for further improvement in standards in English, particularly in writing. The quality of teaching has improved and is satisfactory overall. Expectations are generally higher, which is having a positive impact on standards. However, pupils' written work is often untidy and poorly presented and in this respect teachers are not demanding enough. While there are examples of very good teaching, the senior management team and governors are aware there is still too much variability in the quality. There is still scope for further improvement in the pace of lessons and the marking of pupils' work.

The children enjoy coming to school. They find the curriculum interesting and enjoy the challenges offered. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, and they are well cared for, guided and supported. Effective teaching in Reception helps children to make good progress and many reach expected standards by the start of Year 1. Almost all children reach good levels in their personal development. Their good skills in working and playing together are built on effectively throughout the school, contributing to a happy school community. Parents value the friendly, family atmosphere of the school, which is based on Catholic beliefs.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in English, particularly in writing.
- Raise the quality of teaching to the level of the best by ensuring that all lessons have a good pace and that teachers' expectations are sufficiently high.
- Improve the quality of marking and presentation of work in all subjects.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory but there is some variation in how well children are doing in different year groups and subjects. Children's attainment when they start Reception is broad, but below average overall. Good teaching and an interesting curriculum ensure good progress in Reception. Most children attain the expected standards by the end of the year, but a significant minority, mainly boys,

who started school with low levels of literacy, are still acquiring basic skills in writing. Good improvement in teaching and the curriculum has ensured that standards by the end of Year 2 are about average. This year there has been a significant improvement in reading. Girls attain better standards than boys in reading and writing, but do not do as well as boys in mathematics. The school has strategies in place to address these differences.

In Years 3 to 6, pupils are making satisfactory progress, although gaps in their earlier learning are still evident. In 2005, Year 6 test results rose to close to the national average. This year results are not as high, although progress from the children's low starting point into school is satisfactory. The school has successfully raised girls' attainment in mathematics and girls are now achieving as well as they should in this subject. Achievement in science is satisfactory, with better development of investigative skills. There is a need to further raise achievement in English, and especially to address the weaknesses in writing, particularly for boys.

There are some variations in the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils' achievement is broadly satisfactory and some children, for example, those in Reception, are doing well. However, for older pupils, provision in the past was not closely tailored to their needs. As a result, and in common with their peers, they still have some ground to make up.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in work across the curriculum. In Year 6, children have thought about and drawn features of 'Our Wonderful World.' Children love caring for the animals that each class has adopted. Detailed examination of the work of Matisse and Picasso extends children's awareness of artistic styles and traditions. The recent work on India has given the whole school an insight into life in a different society.

Attendance is about average. Children are friendly. Behaviour is satisfactory, but deteriorates in those lessons where pace falls and introductions are too long. Children do not consider bullying to be a serious issue but are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about this. Children like the way disagreements between them are solved successfully by discussion.

Children make a positive contribution to the community through involvement in activities in the parish, for example, attending masses at the church and distributing harvest and Christmas gifts. They increasingly adopt healthy life-styles, and the school council has introduced more healthy options to the tuck shop. Children understand the need for plenty of exercise. Improving skills in English and mathematics and involvement in the election of council members prepare children satisfactorily for their future life.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teaching has some good features and some lessons are very good, but there is too much variability in the quality across the school. The majority of lessons proceed at a brisk pace but where they do not, a few children become inattentive and need to be drawn back into the lesson. This is often done effectively by the teaching assistants. The use of subject specific vocabulary is effective in many lessons and this is contributing to improvements in achievement. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, for example, clear use of vocabulary helped pupils understand the different ways of referring to number operations. A key feature of the effective teaching in Reception is the sharp focus on promoting children's personal development. Consequently, by the end of Reception the majority of children are well prepared for the next stage in their learning. Where teaching is particularly effective, as in Year 2, this has had a major impact in terms of raising standards, as is evident in the marked improvements in reading.

Whilst information gained from assessments has already made a positive contribution to teaching and learning, marking rarely tells pupils what they need to do to improve. Work in children's books shows teachers' expectations are not always high enough in terms of presentation and the quality of handwriting.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and the work to make it more exciting and interesting is beginning to have a positive impact. The good Reception curriculum ensures children progress well in all areas of learning. The strong focus on personal and social development means that children learn to work and play happily with each other, care for their pets and have positive attitudes to their learning. In Years 1 to 6, topics are being developed to help make learning relevant to children's experiences. These developments make good links between subjects, while ensuring English and mathematics are given sufficient emphasis. A particular focus is to provide opportunities for writing in subjects across the curriculum that have relevance for the child. However, much of this work is in the early stages and the impact is not yet evident. Over the past two years, more attention has been given to practical work in science which has improved achievement in this subject. Provision for design and technology is especially well developed now. Children have noticed the improvements in some subjects and, during the inspection, commented on how much they enjoy them. Information and communication technology (ICT) has improved so that children learn the necessary skills, but they do not make enough use of these in subjects across the curriculum. Children take part in a satisfactory range of clubs, including football, craft, mathematics and dance. Physical and health education encourages children to be healthy and fit.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

The friendly atmosphere and satisfactory care and guidance support children's achievement. Good pastoral care helps children feel secure in school. Class teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for Reception children, ensuring that they settle well into school life. The small number of children who speak English as an additional language receive good support. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are increasingly well supported and their progress is improving, although there is still some work to do to improve achievement of pupils in Years 3 to 6. Child protection and health and safety procedures are securely in place and known by all. Improved assessment procedures allow teachers to monitor pupils' progress well from year to year and information is carefully used to set individual targets, particularly in English and mathematics. The school is aware that the next step is to develop these systems in other subjects. Most parents are supportive of the school and its work and they value the help given to individuals.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and improving rapidly. The leadership of the headteacher is good. He provides clear educational direction which has led to the school overcoming many weaknesses rapidly. The headteacher, governors and senior management team are determined to continue to raise standards and further improve the quality of teaching. They have taken effective action to achieve these aims. This demonstrates a strong capacity to improve the school further.

The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate. The school acknowledges that standards are still not high enough in writing and that some aspects of teaching are not of a sufficiently good quality. Regular checks by the headteacher and some senior managers on the quality of teaching and learning and follow-up action are beginning to address weaknesses effectively. Those co-ordinators playing an active role in monitoring teaching and learning in the classroom are having a positive impact on raising standards, for example, in reading. However, the school is aware it needs to involve all co-ordinators in checking the quality of teaching and learning in the areas for which they are responsible.

Governance is good. The governors are supportive and have a good understanding of priorities. Their strategic role in the management of the school is effective. Parents are positive about the school, as are their children, who are increasingly involved in contributing to improvements through their suggestions to the school council. The school has established particularly good links with schools in the area and with local authority advisors, which has contributed towards improvements, for example, in the teaching of investigative skills in science.

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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>	3	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	3	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>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	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	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	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>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	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	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 greeting Dr Bradshaw and me with lots of smiles and for being so friendly and polite to us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and were very pleased that you are happy to come to school.

These are some of the things that we liked most:

- You are working hard to try to improve your work and are beginning to make the progress that you should in your lessons.
- You find learning interesting and you said that you particularly like ICT and design and technology now.
- You have a good understanding about being healthy, what makes you safe and how you can help each other and the adults in and around the school.
- Adults look after you well and make sure you are fit, healthy and safe.

These are the things that we have asked your school to do:

- You have made improvements in your English, mathematics and science, but we think you could do even better, particularly in your writing.
- When your teachers mark your work we have asked them to tell you what you need to do next to improve.
- You need to make your work look neat and well presented. We have asked your teachers to help you to do this.