



St Edmund's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123225
LEA Oxfordshire LEA
Inspection number 281436
Inspection dates 12 October 2005 to 13 October 2005
Reporting inspector Christopher Schenk HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Radley Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Abingdon
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Oxfordshire OX14 3PP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01235521558
Number on roll	233	Fax number	01235532778
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr John Molloy
Date of previous inspection	10 July 2000	Headteacher	Miss Joan Harte

Age group 3 to 11	Inspection dates 12 October 2005 - 13 October 2005	Inspection number 281436
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Edmund's is a Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic school of around average size. It is in Abingdon but draws its pupils from quite a wide area. Nearly all come from Roman Catholic families. Attainment on entry is broadly average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is about half the national average. The proportion of pupils whose first language is believed not to be English is below average and so is the proportion identified as having special educational needs. The school has nursery status but has not yet received the funding to open a nursery class. Therefore, at the time of the inspection there were no three year olds on roll.

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 an effective school that gives good value for money. Pupils are given a good start in the Foundation Stage, make steady progress in Key Stage 1 and particularly good progress in Key Stage 2 to reach standards that are above average by the time they are 11. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are given an interesting and varied range of lessons, though better use could be made of the links between subjects. The school has rightly judged that it is effective, and its self-evaluation has demonstrated the ability to identify areas for improvement and do something about them. Behaviour has improved and is now good. There have also been improvements in the standards achieved by seven year olds, which need to be sustained and consolidated. The standards of writing throughout the school have improved, though there is still further to go.

What the school should do to improve further

* Continue to raise pupils' achievements in writing. * Ensure that the improvements in Key Stage 1 are sustained. * Make better use of the links between subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their learning, particularly in Key Stage 2, as a result of the careful assessments that are made, the ambitious targets that are set and the good teaching they receive. When they first come to the school at the age of four, their overall attainment is broadly average but there is a wide range and some do not have the skills normally expected of a four year old. They make a good start in the Foundation Stage and by the time they are five most of them are reaching the goals expected of them. They continue to make steady progress in Key Stage 1 and last year they attained standards in reading, writing and mathematics that compare well with the national average in most respects, but still showed the need for some further improvement in writing. The attainment of seven-year-olds has improved over the last few years, and there is now a need to ensure that these improvements are sustained. They make particularly good progress in Key Stage 2 and by the time that they are 11 they achieve standards in English, mathematics and science that are above the national average. These high standards have been consistently sustained for several years. The school is aware that boys have not done as well as girls in English, and particularly in writing. Steps have been taken to improve boys' writing and they have already had an effect, although there is still more to be done.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The school is a calm and orderly working community where the relationships, behaviour, and attitudes are good.

This is evident in the strong ethos of the school, through which all pupils are valued and respected. The school recently identified improvements in behaviour as a priority and has successfully brought them about, making effective use of the positive encouragement of good behaviour. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong because moral and social issues are taught well. Pupils show good consideration for one another and respect for the feelings and beliefs of others. The cultural development of pupils is particularly good. There are very strong links with schools around the world and pupils' awareness of their own local community is enhanced by an extensive range of visits and visitors. Pupils feel safe and are confident that they can approach teachers and other adults for help and support. Attitudes to learning are generally good. This is evident from the pupils' enjoyment of school and the continuing improvement in attendance that is now slightly above the national average. Pupils participate well in lessons and the many extra-curricular activities. They are justly proud of their school. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously, is effective and gives pupils a voice. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and are allowed to drink water during the school day. There is also a good emphasis on physical activities, in lessons and in after school clubs. The pupils' future economic well-being is helped by the skills they acquire in literacy, numeracy and information technology.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is generally good. Lessons are well planned and teachers take account of the different levels of attainment in their classes. As a result, pupils are usually given tasks at the right level of difficulty with sufficient challenge for those who are doing well and sufficient support for those who are having some difficulties. Teachers explain clearly what they want their pupils to learn and because the pupils understand what they are aiming for, they are able to play an important part in assessing how well they have done. Assessment is very well used in lessons to help the teacher to plan what to do next. Teachers ask a good mix of questions, to test factual knowledge, to make their pupils think hard, and to make sure that all pupils are included and involved. The school's focus on bringing about improvements in writing is evident in the teaching. In one particularly successful lesson, Year 6 pupils analysed articles from newspapers to identify the elements of journalistic style in preparation for writing sports reports of forthcoming football and netball matches. The thorough assessments in English, mathematics and science enable teachers to set challenging targets which are shared with the pupils. Assessments in other subjects are made, but now need to be more consistent so that they can be better used to track progress in the skills that are specific to the different subjects. However, any development in the already elaborate assessment and record-keeping systems needs to be carefully undertaken to ensure that teachers do not spend too much time on paperwork. There are a good number of teaching assistants, who are well briefed and effectively deployed. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teaching assistants are used well to

support the learning of these pupils and also make a particularly valuable contribution to the work in art and in design and technology.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Thorough planning and provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that the children get off to a good start. The 'Forest School', in which pupils once a week have an opportunity for environmental study and outdoor play in a nearby woodland, has been particularly successful in developing social and language skills. In the rest of the school the curriculum is generally good but there is room for improvement. There is a strong and appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy but better use could be made of the links between subjects to provide a broader and more balanced curriculum. The school teaches modern foreign languages as part of the Abingdon Partnership Scheme and has plans to extend its provision in the near future. The curriculum is considerably enhanced by a good range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular clubs and activities. Pupils' future economic well-being is helped by giving them opportunities to learn through creative and practical group-based activities that promote their independence, initiative and co-operation. The pupils learn how to stay safe and healthy through personal, social and health education and in lessons in science and physical education. The health education programme, for example, teaches pupils the value of healthy eating, hygiene and exercise and makes them aware of the dangers of drugs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding. There are effective health and safety procedures and these are regularly reviewed. Arrangements for child protection are securely in place and all adults have a very good awareness of their responsibilities. Pupils have very trusting relationships with adults. They express confidence in their teachers and enjoy school. Pupils are taught how to take care of themselves and to make healthy and safe choices. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in class and in small groups and make as much progress as the other pupils. The school works well with external agencies from whom it seeks advice and support when necessary. The academic and personal development of all pupils is strongly supported. The school has effective systems for tracking how well pupils are doing and this enables them to be given the right levels of support and challenge. The inspectors agree with the positive views of many parents who wrote to express their appreciation of the way that the school has enabled their children to be part of a community where they feel safe, included and valued.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school that is focused on bringing about improvements in the pupils' achievements and personal development. She has good support from teachers, other staff, parents and governors. The headteacher and the subject leaders monitor work across the school by observing lessons, looking at planning and evaluating pupils' work. The school's self-evaluation is effective. Three important areas for improvement were identified last year: behaviour, assessment and writing. The whole school approaches to behaviour have successfully brought about improvement. The deputy head has taken the lead in improving assessment practices. The English subject leader has worked closely with the headteacher and the rest of the staff to improve standards in writing. The School Improvement Plan is a useful working document, to which subject leaders can contribute. It may be sensible to focus on a smaller number of targets and it would certainly be useful to give clearer and sharper criteria for success. Parents' views are sought and acted upon. For example, parents were consulted and kept informed about the behaviour policy. The findings of a survey, that many parents did not feel well informed about Religious Education, has led to increased communication. The governors play an outstanding part in the life of the school. They have a strong understanding that their role is to do the best for the pupils and that the only way to be sure that school policies are effective is to see them in action and talk to the pupils about them. They regularly review subjects, by looking at policies, observing lessons, talking to pupils about the work they have done and talking to the subject leader. One of the governors, who has a brief for pupils with special educational needs, has played a valuable part in a review of provision, talking to pupils to make sure that they understand the targets that are set for them.

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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	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	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	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	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 for welcoming us to your school. We were pleased to see that you behave well, look after each other and are polite and friendly to visitors.

We think you are getting on well in your learning and are very well cared for by your teachers and other staff. We particularly like the way that your teachers explain to you what they want you to learn. Because you understand what you are supposed to be learning you have a good idea yourself of how well you are getting on and if you need more help you are able to ask for it. You are also able to say when you are sure that you have learned something so that your teacher can move you on to more difficult work.

We talked to some of your teachers and some governors before we left. We told them what we liked about the school and we also asked them to do three things.* Make sure that you keep up the good work you are doing in the infants in reading and mathematics.* Help you to get even better at writing throughout the school.* Find more ways of making links between subjects to make lessons even more interesting.