



Kidderminster, St Ambrose Catholic Primary

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131400
LEA Worcestershire
Inspection number 282206
Inspection dates 8 November 2005 to 9 November 2005
Reporting inspector John Paull RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Leswell Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Kidderminster
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Worcestershire DY10 1RP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01562 823 568
Number on roll	180	Fax number	01562 745 376
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Paul Collins
Date of previous inspection	8 July 2002	Headteacher	Mrs Marie Yates

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St. Ambrose Primary is located in Kidderminster, which is part of the Catholic diocese of Birmingham. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is about average. Pupils are predominantly of White British origin, although a significant number have origins in a range of other European countries, including Italy, Ireland and Poland, and also the Philippines. Some of these pupils speak very little English when they first arrive. The number of pupils identified with special educational needs, although below average, is growing and the number of these pupils with a statement of entitlement is above average. Overall, attainment on entry is below average.

Previously, the school passed through a turbulent period when standards were too low and weaknesses were apparent in leadership and management. In May 2004, Her Majesty's Inspectors found that an acceptable standard was now being provided and that improvement in key areas was good.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The inspection confirms the school's view that its pupils receive a satisfactory education and offers sound value for money. The children in Reception achieve well as a result of the good provision that is made for them. At the end of Year 2 many pupils reach average standards, and several exceed them. The older pupils have gaps in their past learning, restricting the standards they reach by the time they leave. This is more strongly apparent in mathematics and science than in English. However, the pupils' standards are rising. Teaching and learning are now good, although the ends of lessons do not consistently provide enough evaluation and assessment of learning. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are strong. Their spiritual and moral development is particularly good. Strengths in care and support have been maintained.

Improvement since the inspection of 2004 has been good. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are strong. Spiritual and moral development is particularly good. Strengths in care and support have been maintained. The quality of provision and children's achievement in the Reception Year are good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide strong leadership. Their determined vision is continuing to have a key impact on increasing rates of pupils' progress. Strong leadership in English has enabled this subject to move forward at a faster rate than others. Considerable goodwill and enthusiasm help pupils with English as an additional language to settle successfully. However, more expertise in this area is required to cater for an expected rise in numbers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the ends of lessons to provide pupils with opportunities to assess how effectively their learning has progressed and to gain insights about how to learn more effectively
- Spread into mathematics and science those features of good management and assessment that have successfully raised standards in English
- Increase knowledge and expertise in the teaching of English as an additional language.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, although younger pupils achieve well, including those in Reception. Recent good teaching has resulted in the pupils making good progress through the school. This has not always been the case. Consequently, this good progress is not consistently reflected in the standards of older pupils, who have experienced gaps in their learning. For Year 6 pupils, national test results are average in English and below average in mathematics and science. English has been led and managed consistently well, so the school's recent improvements have occurred from a stronger base in this subject. Amongst younger age groups, standards are average in all subjects and many pupils exceed expected levels, as shown by their performance in national tests in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. Trends in

test results are upwards and the school's challenging targets are increasingly met. Standards are set to rise further.

Pupils with English as an additional language achieve equally as well as other pupils. The recent arrival of a group of pupils of Polish heritage, who speak little English, has provided the school with a considerable challenge to ensure that their specific needs are met. The school has responded very well by turning to all the help at its disposal, including that of the Polish Consul and Polish speakers to help with translations, but its own expertise is limited. Pupils with learning difficulties or other disabilities make good progress towards their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal development and well-being. The very good quality of their spiritual and moral development complements the school's religious character. In school assemblies, the quality of singing is very good and pupils join reverently in prayers. In discussions, they show respect for others' views and applaud their achievements. Their fund-raising for charities indicates their generous spirit. They have a good understanding of their own culture and a sound understanding of other cultures.

Social development is good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They work hard, respond quickly to instructions and cooperate well with others. Their enthusiasm for being set stimulating challenges is impressive. Good examples are competitions in mathematics and in singing French action songs. They have a good understanding of healthy eating, and play together energetically and responsibly. They willingly take on duties around the school, for instance as playground helpers. The School Council acts as an effective voice for all pupils, discussing issues of concern raised by each year group. A notable feature is the way that Year 6 representatives take responsibility for helping sound out the concerns of the Reception and Year 1 classes. Attendance is close to average and the school follows up absences rigorously.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching is good. It has continued to improve since the last inspection, although a little inconsistency remains. Though not common practice, the final part of one excellent lesson, in numeracy in Year 5, was used impressively to assess and evaluate what the pupils had learnt. In this way, levels of understanding and knowledge were deepened. A general strength is that teachers' planning has been developed to ensure that previous gaps in teaching are eliminated and cannot re-occur. As a result, pupils' learning is improving steadily and their achievement is rising. In English, assessment has been used very effectively to find out where weaknesses lie so that the teaching is better focused on ensuring that the pupils get back on track,

make progress and meet their targets. As a result, much is being done to eliminate any previous underachievement. The needs of pupils at all levels are met, including those of high attainment or those with learning difficulties. Similar strategies are planned to improve teaching and learning in other subjects, but are not at the same advanced stage. Teaching in the Reception class is good.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Standards in English have risen impressively because highly structured programmes have been introduced with determination, for specific and well-focused reasons such as improving boys' writing. This approach has not featured to anywhere near the same extent in other subjects, although closer attention to teaching technical vocabulary in mathematics and science is now being paid. Improved opportunities for pupils to use ICT and carry out scientific investigations are also having a good impact on their learning. French lessons for the juniors are a very good feature of provision.

The work in classes is adjusted to take due account of pupils of differing abilities. Planning for the most able has improved and is satisfactory overall. The targets for pupils with learning difficulties are well focused. However, the school lacks resources for the increasing number of pupils for whom English is an additional language.

After-class activities are good; the school has close links with the church and it makes strong contributions to the life of the local community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff know the pupils well and develop warm relationships with them. Child protection procedures are well understood. There are sound procedures for dealing with any incidents of bullying that occur. Pupils say that they feel safe and know whom to turn to if necessary. Lesson activities are sensitively varied so that pupils who learn in different ways are given equal opportunity to take part and make progress. Those with English as an additional language are given good personal support, although their language development lacks a formal structure.

Assessment procedures are sound overall and are good in English and mathematics. Age-related targets are now set, so pupils have a better understanding of how to improve. However, the school agrees that more could be done to include them in assessing their own work and progress. Strong teamwork between teachers and assistants ensures that pupils having difficulties in lessons are given extra help.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have made determined progress, supported well by staff, in introducing measures to eradicate

underachievement. The impact of this drive is very clearly revealed in the continuing improvements to teaching quality and the rising standards of the younger pupils and in English throughout the school. Improvements in mathematics and science, although not as advanced, are under way. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the changes that have occurred and of what is being done to eliminate the school's difficult legacy.

Governance is another much improved area of leadership. Committees are organised effectively and the governors have a sound understanding of the school's performance. An important example is the governors' involvement in the advanced planning stage of the sale of an unused part of the premises. The revenues are to be used to develop important aspects of the site and other resources.

Staffing appears more stable than has often been the case in the past, which contributes more effectively to the management of subjects. Provision for special educational needs is good and coordination of the work of the Reception year is strong.

Leaders and managers have ensured that the school has made good progress recently. It is 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>	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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ 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

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	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	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	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?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	3	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	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

St Ambrose Roman Catholic Primary School, Leswell Street, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY10 1RP

10 November 2005

Dear Children,

Thank you for being so welcoming when Dr Parker and I visited your school. We think that you are making good progress, although some of you in the older classes have gaps in your knowledge that you need to make up. We were very pleased to see how hard you and your teachers are working to help you achieve this. We thoroughly enjoyed being in your school and coming to your lessons. We especially enjoyed chatting with you about your work. Dr Parker told me how much he enjoyed talking with the school council, and I enjoyed eating my meals with you. You were all very helpful, well behaved and polite.

What we like most about your school:

Your headteacher and deputy headteacher are working very successfully to help you reach the levels of work that you should.

You work very sensibly in your lessons.

Many of you enjoy school and that you do such a lot to help in the church and the community.

The school councillors and playground "Busy Bees" do a good job.

Your teachers help you to feel safe and sound. What we have asked your headteacher, the staff and the school's governors to do next:

To use the last part of each lesson to give you a chance to think about how you can help yourselves to learn.

To make sure that work in all your subjects is managed as well as it is in English.

To make sure that there is enough expert teaching for children whose main language is not English.

We hope that you will always be proud of your school and wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely, John W. Paull (Lead inspector)