

# St Fidelis Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101458
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bexley
<b>Inspection number</b>	286067
<b>Inspection date</b>	12 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Wendy Simmons

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	452
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Br James Boner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Lindsay Wise
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 June 2001
<b>School address</b>	Bexley Road Erith DA8 3HQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01322 337752
<b>Fax number</b>	01322 332160

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

St Fidelis is a large and popular school, which educates pupils from a wide range of backgrounds. Most pupils are baptised Roman Catholics and the majority come from White British backgrounds. During the last four years an increasing proportion of pupils from Black African heritages have joined the school. Pupils come from wide ranging social and economic backgrounds and overall there is less deprivation than is average. A few pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language. More pupils than average have learning difficulties. The school has the 'Basic Skills Quality Mark' and is working to gain the 'Healthy Schools' award. Links with the church are well established.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Fidelis is a good school with outstanding features including the care provided, pupils' personal development and the curriculum. The headteacher and staff know the pupils well and there is an ethos of mutual respect and support. Throughout the school, relationships are outstanding and this makes for a happy school. Dedicated staff work for the all round benefit of the pupils. Leadership and management are good overall with the headteacher providing outstanding leadership. As a result, pupils achieve well and reach above average standards in their work by the end of Year 6. Parents have confidence in the school. One summed this up when saying, 'It's such a lovely school. Not only is it well run but the children are very well cared for with good teachers and friendly staff'.

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. They settle quickly due to excellent links with parents and successfully learn the important basic skills, so that they are well prepared for Year 1. Throughout the school, staff have high expectations. During the last year staff have been improving the way that they assess pupils' progress and as a result, pupils who had underachieved in the past are now achieving well.

Teaching and learning are good and well supported by a high quality curriculum that makes learning very interesting. There is a good focus on helping pupils to discuss their ideas and work, which is helpful to all pupils and especially the few who are learning English as an additional language. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because they benefit from effective support. Carefully thought out links between subjects and a good range of visits make learning enjoyable and meaningful. As a result, pupils work hard and are very enthusiastic learners. Teachers often give good guidance on how to develop pupils' work, but less frequently on how to edit their writing. Consequently, pupils do not always understand exactly how to make individual pieces of work even better. In the last year pupils have been doing far more mathematical problem solving activities and this good initiative is helping standards to rise by the end of Year 6, especially for the most able pupils. However, teachers are not providing enough opportunities for pupils to record each step of their calculations and therefore explain their thinking in a logical way. The school is ambitious to become outstanding and is keen to work on these improvements as part of the plans for development. All pupils do especially well in reading because skills build up quickly from the Foundation Stage through to Year 6 because they read regularly and talk about their books.

Links with the church are well established and reflect the school's caring ethos and pupils' outstanding spiritual, social and moral development. Pupils value each other and in their work make an excellent contribution to their immediate community and the wider world. Pupils are well prepared for the future because they receive an 'all round' education and develop confidence, high aspirations and show respect. They know about how to eat healthily and keenly take part in sporting and many high quality musical activities.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to edit and extend their own writing.
- Help pupils to structure and record the way that they solve mathematical problems.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are above average by the end of Year 6 and pupils' achievement is good, this includes those with learning difficulties and pupils from Black African backgrounds. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. When they join the school most can do what is usually expected for their age overall, but relatively few are working at levels which are higher than those expected. At this point, children's personal skills are stronger than their communication skills and their knowledge of the world around them is sometimes limited. By the end of the Foundation Stage their skills are average in all six areas of learning and some are working at levels which are in advance of those expected.

Progress is good between Years 1 and 6, although variable between year groups. Pupils' good achievement reflects a very well thought out curriculum and good teaching and learning. These features ensure that skills and knowledge build up systematically. There is a very strong focus on promoting speaking and reading skills and the school has made a good start on lifting standards in writing. More needs to be done in some year groups to stretch pupils so that they become more proficient in editing their own writing. Almost all parents feel that their children make good progress, although a few noted that gifted and talented children sometimes get bored and should be doing better. In the last year the school has focused on the most able pupils and their achievement is now good. Inspection evidence shows that the school is on track to improve performance in national tests this year. The school's data show that significantly more pupils will gain higher levels in their writing and mathematics than they did in 2006. Girls were performing better than boys in 2006, but the school is successfully closing the gap due to improvements in the curriculum.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school as reflected in their good attendance, positive attitudes, and respect for each other. They say, 'We are all different, but the same on the inside'. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have a very good understanding of different cultures and religions and links with the church, assemblies and musical activities contribute much to pupils' spiritual development, as evident when pupils sang 'Our God is a Great Big God'.

Pupils' behaviour is good and the promotion of important social skills starts well in the Foundation Stage, where children successfully learn how to work with others and concentrate well. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibility and understand how to be safe in the world around them. For example, pupils learnt about the importance of being law abiding citizens through the 'Junior Citizen' project, which enabled pupils to visit the local magistrates' court. By working as a team of 'Eco Warriors' they collect and recycle waste. Pupils make sensible choices when choosing healthy meals and take part in a good range of sports to aid their fitness. In particular, they value the six week focused fitness programme. Pupils worked successfully on an enterprise scheme and raised £1000 to develop the outside playground. They make an outstanding contribution to the community especially through fund raising and by sharing their musical talents.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Pupils are keen to learn and teachers help them to be successful by providing different approaches to learning. Teachers plan lessons carefully to match with pupils' varied abilities. High quality support by assistants ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language achieve well. In English, adults have high expectations and ask good questions that help pupils to use imaginative and ambitious phrases, words and sentences. Sometimes teachers show pupils how to edit their work, but there is not enough of this to help pupils to understand how to do this independently. In mathematics, basic skills are well taught and work is challenging. Pupils often make jottings to record calculations, but they are not skilled enough in recording their calculations to show exactly how they solved problems. Pupils say that, 'Learning is fun. We can discuss our ideas and put our point of view and this helps us to understand'. Specialist teaching for music enriches learning and pupils learn a good range of art skills.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The curriculum is modified well for all groups of learners. The increased range of catch-up and support activities and improved provision for the more able enables pupils to achieve well. Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy a good range of opportunities to explore things for themselves while also working with adults on focused activities. Links between subjects together with the good range of visits and extra clubs make the curriculum enjoyable. As a result, pupils gain important skills for life. For example, they are active in sports and healthy eating is well promoted. Skills such as salsa dancing enhance enjoyment. Improved investigation work, in mathematics and science, and more independent learning activities are helping pupils to make good progress. A recent problem solving evening was attended by over 100 families. In the last year the school has improved the provision for boys so that they enjoy writing more. This has been successful, as evident when Year 6 created science fiction stories entitled, 'A change of time'. The introduction of joined handwriting from the Foundation Stage is a good initiative and is working well.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

Excellent relationships and strong links with the community ensure that the care, guidance and support given to pupils are outstanding. Parents value the support given by staff and one noted, 'They are never too busy to make time for a child or a parent'. Children are helped to settle quickly into the Foundation Stage. Excellent home visits aid this process and contribute much to the first phase of assessing pupils' skills. One parent confirmed that the transition process is, 'Extremely well managed'. Very close links with the church and specialist support for pupils with learning difficulties enhance pastoral care very well. Pupils are quickly targeted if they need additional support and pupils know their targets for improvement. Child protection procedures are robust. The school acts on parents' and pupils' suggestions well.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership is good and the school is well managed. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. Senior staff support her very well and overall there is a strong focus on achievement and the care and personal development of pupils. Leaders carefully evaluate information about how well pupils are doing and use this to plan activities and support programmes to ensure that pupils make good progress. Team work is strong and systems are well structured to ensure that middle managers are now taking more responsibility for standards and pupils' progress. Governors give good support and know the school well, often asking challenging questions about pupils' progress. Leaders listen to parents' and pupils' views. For example, they would like bike racks to encourage healthy lifestyles and this suggestion has been acted upon with 20 racks and helmets to be provided by Transport for London in the near future. Leaders are ambitious to make the school outstanding. They have a clear vision for the school and there is a good capacity to improve further.

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## Annex A

## 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>
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

21 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Fidelis Catholic Primary School, Erith, DA8 3HQ

You may remember that I came to your school recently to find out about your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helping me with this. I am writing to let you know what I found out.

Your school is a good school where you clearly enjoy learning and value all that the adults do for you. You are exceptionally well cared for and this helps you to be happy and make good progress. You have an excellent range of interesting activities to do and often you do many things to help and entertain others in the wider world around you. Teaching and learning are good. Your teachers make learning challenging and fun and in return you work hard and learn new things successfully and so, your work is better than in many other schools in the country. Your reading is especially good. Mathematics has improved, as you are working on more problem solving activities and think about how to do the calculations. You also enjoy writing and are working well on this overall. Well done to the younger children who have started to use joined up writing. I especially enjoyed listening to many of you talking to each other about your ideas for making your writing interesting. Music and singing are especially good and your art work is done well. I am pleased that you are learning so much about a wide range of faiths and cultures, while also developing your own spiritual development which is outstanding. Congratulations for being polite, respectful, and behaving well.

Most importantly, your headteacher and all of the staff and governors are working especially hard to make the school even better for you. I have asked them to do the following things to help you to do even better:

- give you more opportunities to edit, extend and improve your writing
- help you to write down, step by step, how you solve mathematical problems.

Please help them with this by continuing to work hard. Good luck with the new cycling to school project, it sounds excellent for keeping you fit!

Yours faithfully

Wendy Simmons

(Lead inspector)