

St Swithun Wells Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102421
Local Authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	286372
Inspection date	2 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr B Luis
Headteacher	Mrs P Singh
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2001
School address	Hunters Hill South Ruislip Ruislip HA4 9HS
Telephone number	01895 671960
Fax number	020 8845 1611

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Swithun Wells Catholic is an average sized primary school. Nearly three quarters of the pupils come from a White British background. The remainder come from a range of other ethnic backgrounds with White Irish and any other White background being the next largest groups. A few pupils speak English as an additional language but very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. The proportion eligible for free school meals is well below average. Children's attainment on entry to the Nursery is broadly in line with national expectations. The school had been led by an interim headteacher during Spring 2007. At the time of the inspection, a second interim headteacher had been in post for just one week and two senior leaders were on long term sick leave.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Swithun Wells Catholic Primary is a good school. Pupils achieve well and their personal development is good.

The school has been through a difficult period with the absence of senior staff. The two interim headteachers have been effective and have received good support from the deputy headteacher. The current interim headteacher is experienced and has swiftly identified the strengths of the school and the priorities for further improvement. The staffing disruptions have meant that the educational provision has not been as consistent as in the recent past. Nevertheless, the school has provided a good level of education and care which has enabled most pupils to achieve well. Leadership and management are good. Parents have clearly been very happy with the school in the past. Understandably, they have expressed concerns about the uncertainty caused by the lack of a permanent headteacher and other teacher absences. The school and governors have not been effective enough in communicating to parents how the staffing issues are being overcome.

Good care, guidance and support contribute significantly to pupils' academic and personal development. Pupils thoroughly enjoy being at school and this is reflected by the above average levels of attendance. Positive relationships between pupils and staff lead to good behaviour. However, attitudes and behaviour can be less positive when the teaching lacks stimulation and pace. Pupils show a clear understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and how to keep safe. Assessment is usually used well to plan pupils' learning and to set individual learning targets in English and mathematics. Pupils therefore have a clear understanding of what that needs to do to improve in these subjects. This good practice has not been extended to science.

Effective provision in the Foundation Stage means that children in Nursery and Reception get off to a good start. They make good progress in all areas of learning. While teaching and learning are good overall, these are less consistent than in the past because of the teacher changes. Pupils make good progress when they are challenged and tasks are well matched to their abilities. However, this good practice is not consistent in all classes. In a few lessons, pace and challenge are not as high and the rate of learning slows. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress and standards are frequently well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. National test results show that standards in Year 6 are well above average overall. However, while pupils make good progress in English and mathematics, progress in science is only satisfactory. This because pupils have insufficient opportunities to plan and carry out scientific investigations particularly in Year 6.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in science in Years 3 to 6 by increasing investigative work and by setting individual learning targets for science.
- Ensure that all lessons have suitable levels of challenge and that learning maintains a brisk pace.
- Improve communication between the school and parents.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well overall. Children in the Nursery and Reception make good progress by the end of Reception and standards are above national expectations. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress in reading writing and mathematics and standards in 2006 in national assessments for Year 2 were well above average. In Year 6, standards are well above average overall. They are well above average in English and mathematics but closer to above average in science. Effective teaching and a well planned English and mathematics curriculum contribute to the good progress in these subjects. Pupils make less progress in science because of the lack of practical and investigative work. Most pupils with learning difficulties make good progress. The few pupils at an early stage of learning English receive well planned support so they make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Most pupils are enthusiastic about school and this is reflected by their good attendance and their keen participation in school activities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are thoughtful in assemblies and reflect on important qualities such as tolerance and patience. Pupils have positive relationships with staff and amongst themselves. Behaviour is good but attitudes can be less positive when the teaching is not sufficiently stimulating. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and possess a good understanding of the importance of healthy diets and taking regular exercise. Those on the school council have initiated recycling projects. Pupils thrive on the opportunities to take on responsibilities. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 act as buddies and support younger pupils in the playground. Pupils make a positive contribution the wider community by raising funds for well known charities. Pupils are well prepared for their future economic well-being because by the time they leave they possess competent skills in literacy and numeracy. In addition to this, their personal and social skills are well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. In the Foundation Stage, teachers provide a good blend of direct teaching and allowing children to explore and work creatively and independently. Elements of teaching in the Nursery are outstanding particularly in language and creative work. Across the school, teachers effectively share learning intentions with the class, so that pupils know what they are expected to learn. Teachers' instructions and explanations are clear and informative although these can be overlong, too teacher directed, and this can restrict pupils' involvement in their learning. When teachers use assessment information effectively, tasks are well matched to pupils' needs. As a result, pupils are challenged well and they make good gains in their learning. In a few lessons, the level of challenge is not appropriate and the rate of learning slows. Not all lessons are sufficiently stimulating or proceed at a brisk pace and this can slow the rate of learning. Teaching assistants are well directed and contribute effectively to pupils' learning, particularly those with learning difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum enables pupils to achieve well and makes a good contribution to their personal development. Provision for English and mathematics is effective and contributes well to pupils' good progress in literacy and numeracy. Pupils in Year 6 do not have sufficient opportunities to acquire and apply skills through scientific investigations. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is currently limited but a new 22 station computer suite is very near completion. Healthy lifestyles and keeping safe receive good attention through a well planned personal, social and health education programme, and through science, physical education and religious education. A good range of additional activities enrich the curriculum and adds to pupils' enjoyment. Clubs include art, football, French, netball, gymnastics tennis, keep fit and poetry. The Foundation Stage curriculum for children in Nursery and Reception is interesting, varied and promotes good progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good pastoral care and support contribute well to pupils' personal development. Procedures to ensure pupils' protection and safety are effective so pupils are safe and secure at school. Staff know the pupils well and have established good relationships with them. Systems for assessing and tracking pupils' attainment and progress are good. Assessment information is generally used well to set suitably challenging individual learning targets in English and mathematics. As a result, pupils know what they are working towards in these subjects. This target setting process has not been extended to science or ICT.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Despite the staffing changes and the absence of key staff, leadership from the interim headteachers and the deputy headteacher has promoted effective educational provision. This good provision has contributed to pupils' good achievement and to their positive personal development.

Self-evaluation by senior staff is effective and the school has made good use of the local authority in the process. As a result, the school knows what it does well and has identified the most pressing areas for improvement. The current headteacher is well focused on teaching and learning and is taking steps to ensure that more staff are involved in the process of self review and improvement planning.

Although effective measures have been taken to overcome the recent staffing difficulties, the school and governors have not provided enough information to parents about the action taken. As a result, a significant proportion of parents have concerns about the future of the school, staffing and they do not feel that sufficient account is taken of their concerns. The school's capacity to improve is currently satisfactory.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

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

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	3
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

14 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Swithun Wells Catholic Primary School, Hunters Hill, South Ruislip, Ruislip, HA4 9HS

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school and showing me your work. I enjoyed my visit and would like to tell you what I found out. St Swithun Wells is a good school despite the changes which have occurred this year.

These things are strengths of the school.

- You clearly enjoy school and your attendance is good.
- Children in Nursery and Reception get off to a good start.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are making good progress in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is mostly good which is why you learn so much.
- You get on well with other pupils and adults.
- The school provides a good range of learning activities with additional clubs and visits.
- Your behaviour is good in and around the school.
- Staff know you well; they take good care of you and give you good support.
- The school is being well led and managed.

These are the things the school has been asked to improve.

- Some of you in Years 3 to 6 could make more progress in science by having more opportunities for practical investigations and having clear individual learning targets for science.
- Sometimes your teachers could challenge you more and this would help you to make even more progress.
- The school could improve communication with your parents.

Finally, thank you once again for all your help. I wish you all the best for the future.

With kind regards

Derek WattsLead inspector