



St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103433
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286658
Inspection dates 7–8 February 2007
Reporting inspector Paul Edwards

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Great Colmore Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Lee Bank
Age range of pupils	3–11		Birmingham B15 2AY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 6921051
Number on roll (school)	210	Fax number	0121 6226343
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Gerrard Crowley
		Headteacher	Liam Fadden
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	7–8 February 2007	286658

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Catherine's is a smaller than average primary school serving an area of significant disadvantage. Just over half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals and over a third have learning difficulties, which is above the national average. About 75% of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A higher than average proportion of pupils enter or leave the school part-way through the year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Catherine's is providing a good education for its pupils. The overwhelming majority of parents are rightly very happy with the quality of education it provides and the comment of one parent was echoed by others when she said, 'The school is always there to talk to and deal with the problems of the children. I would not send my children to any other school.'

Children are provided with a good start to their education in the Nursery and Reception classes. They enter school with levels of skills that are much lower than those seen nationally, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Although they make good progress throughout the Foundation Stage, few are likely to attain the goals expected for their age when they enter Year 1.

When considering their starting points, pupils achieve well throughout the school. Although standards are below average at the end of Year 6, they are improving. Over the last two years pupils' skills in both English and mathematics have improved gradually in Key Stage 1. A small number of more able pupils however, do not attain the standards of which they are capable, particularly in their reading and writing. A range of intervention strategies has been introduced and the more able pupils are doing better at Key Stage 2. These strategies have not been as effective in ensuring a few of the average attaining pupils do as well as they should in this key stage. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils learn well because teachers make good use of their subject knowledge to make lessons interesting. Additional support is provided, enabling targeted groups of pupils to make particularly good progress. Teachers are not however, making the most effective use of the wealth of assessment information to plan lessons for a few pupils who are not in the target groups.

Pupils' personal and social development is good. Pupils behave well because of the high expectations of staff and the consistent approach adopted by the school. The pupils thoroughly enjoy lessons because the good curriculum provides them with a wide range of interesting activities. There are however, insufficient opportunities for them to practise writing skills in other subjects. Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Pupils are happy in school because, as one pupil said, 'they are well looked after' and cared for. From the Nursery class onwards there is a strong and effective emphasis on developing the pupils' self-confidence.

Leadership and management are good. The school has developed good procedures for tracking and monitoring the work of the pupils. As a result of this, some groups of pupils who have been underachieving in the past have been provided with additional help and guidance, enabling them to do better. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning has not been sufficiently rigorous to ensure all pupils consistently make the progress of which they are capable.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading and writing by ensuring teachers make effective use of assessment information to challenge all pupils sufficiently.

- Ensure teaching and learning are monitored more rigorously, to ensure all pupils, particularly the more able in Key Stage 1 and the average attaining in Key Stage 2, are provided with consistently challenging activities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well throughout the school although standards are below average when they leave the school. In the 2006 National Curriculum tests standards in reading were significantly below the national average at the end of Year 2 and standards in mathematics and writing were well below average. At the end of Year 6, results were well below the national average in English and below average in mathematics and science. Inspection evidence shows that standards continue to improve in English although they remain below average.

When children enter the Nursery class their overall attainment is very much lower than that seen in most schools and their literacy skills are particularly low. They make good progress but their skills on entry to Year 1 are still well below those expected for children of their age. The introduction of different strategies, including withdrawal groups, additional support and specialist teaching has had a good impact on the progress of those groups of pupils who have traditionally underachieved at the school. However, in whole class literacy activities, a small number of pupils in other groups are not being challenged sufficiently. For example, a few more able pupils in Key Stage 1 underachieve in their writing and a few average attaining pupils underachieve in Key Stage 2. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well throughout the school because they are provided with a good level of well focused support. There is no significant difference in the achievement of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Whilst the girls do much better in Key Stage 1, the difference in achievement is reduced considerably by the end of Year 6, as a result of good intervention strategies.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Although pupils start school with personal and social skills that are well below the norm, they make good gains here and grow into confident, self-disciplined and sensible young people by the time they are in Year 6. Pupils get along together well, both at play and in lessons, and there is a high level of racial harmony throughout the school. Pupils are polite and well behaved and enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in the school's attendance figures which have risen significantly over recent years although are still below the national average. Many of these skills will equip pupils well in the future including in the world of work but standards in literacy are not yet good enough to fully complement these personal attributes. Pupils have developed a good understanding of healthy living and most happily choose to eat fruit daily. They appreciate the merits of exercise and very many take advantage of a wide range of clubs on offer to them after school. They adhere to school routines well and they use

equipment safely and sensibly and this contributes well to creating a calm and orderly environment where pupils feel safe and comfortable. Of particular note is how well older pupils take on responsibility. For example, Year 6 pupils are proud to be entrusted as play leaders helping younger pupils at break and lunchtimes, and the school council has been successful in bringing about a range of improvements in the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes provides children with a good start to their education and they develop good working habits. Children are provided with a good range of interesting and stimulating activities. Teachers focus particularly effectively on improving the children's speaking skills. Throughout the school, improvement in the teaching of mathematics is helping to raise standards, particularly in the pupils' mental arithmetic skills. Teachers are placing a considerable emphasis on improving the quality of writing. Teachers are using their good subject knowledge effectively to encourage pupils to write at length and in a range of styles.

Teachers are making good use of assessment information when planning lessons, which has enabled most pupils to make good progress. However teachers do not always provide sufficiently challenging work and this means that for a few pupils progress is not quite as good as it could be. Pupils with learning difficulties are provided with good support, both in class and when withdrawn from class for targeted group activities. This enables them to make good gains in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a curriculum that is well matched to the needs of its pupils with an appropriate emphasis on developing personal and social skills in the Foundation Stage and basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school. Enrichment activities are especially good. There is a good range of visits, visitors and after school clubs throughout the year. In addition, a block of concentrated enrichment activities including cookery, gardening, chess, health and fitness, is an annual feature of the curriculum and one that pupils clearly enjoy and greatly look forward to. Education for health and safety is good and collective worship and religious education provide good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school acknowledges that it is not making the most of opportunities to develop literacy skills through planning in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for, guided and supported and this contributes strongly to the progress they make and the good standards that they achieve in their personal development. Pupils are treated fairly, with respect, and entrusted with areas of responsibility. Pupils' views are sought regularly and acted upon and so pupils feel valued and part of the school's continuing development. Aspects of healthy living are promoted well. Arrangements to protect pupils from harm, including staff vetting procedures, are good. Health and safety audits of the premises and control measures to reduce any potential risks to pupils on visits out of school are thorough. Pupils who enter the school later in the year are supported well, enabling them to settle quickly. The teachers' marking of pupils' books is of a consistently good quality and provides pupils with a clear understanding of what they need to do next to improve. Whilst the monitoring of pupils' academic performance is satisfactory, not all teachers make the best use of information to guide all pupils to achieve as well as they should.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's self-evaluation is accurate, and, based on improvements since the previous inspection, shows good capacity for further improvement. Improvement to the provision for physical education has had a good impact on encouraging pupils to adopt a healthier lifestyle. As a result of improved assessment and tracking procedures the leadership team has identified where pupils have not been achieving as well as they should. However, although the data is held on computer, the format does not make it easy to identify when groups of pupils are doing better or less well than might be expected. The leadership team has looked carefully at what needs to improve and has utilised the staffing effectively to raise standards. Regular checking of teaching and learning has helped to raise their quality and the focus on improving the achievement of specific groups has been effective. However, the school still has a little way to go to ensure that all teachers challenge sufficiently all groups of pupils other than those in the target groups. The governors visit the school regularly and fulfil their duties effectively, supporting where needed but asking challenging questions to help in the drive for further improvements.

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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	3
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	3

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.

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	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

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to see how well your school is doing. Thank you for talking to us. We were sorry that the snow meant that you could not join us on our second day! We know most of you and your parents think that it is a good school and we agree. These are the things that the school is doing well:

- Most of you are making good progress in your work.
- You thoroughly enjoy school, behave well and work hard.
- You are developing a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe.
- The teachers provide you with good lessons and a lot of interesting activities.
- The school takes good care of you and provides good support for those of you who need extra help.

We have asked those in charge of the school to help you improve your work in reading and writing by making sure that you have the chance to practise writing skills in other subjects and that the work is sufficiently challenging for all of you.

I hope you continue to work hard and enjoy school. Thank you again for helping us with our work.