

St Paul's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109269
Local Authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	288333
Inspection date	27 June 2007
Reporting inspector	David Clegg

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eugene Campbell
Headteacher	Julian Clements
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2001
School address	Sundridge Park Yate Bristol BS37 4EP
Telephone number	01454 866790
Fax number	01454 866792

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This average sized school serves a mixed area. It has an average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. There is a higher than usual proportion of pupils who join the school after having started their education somewhere else. The school is designated to serve a community of Traveller families of Irish heritage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'We would strongly recommend this school to other parents' is just one of many comments that indicate how highly parents value this good school. Some aspects of its work are outstanding. These include the pupils' outstanding personal development and the excellent level of care, guidance and support offered to individuals. The school is determinedly inclusive and over the past two years has taken in a significant number of pupils part-way through their schooling who have found education very challenging. These pupils have thrived. Pupils enthusiastically embrace all that the school offers and feel that they are helped to learn as much as they can. They work hard and behave extremely well. Even the youngest children concentrate for lengthy periods. Pupils are fully aware of the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. They feel safe and secure and have great confidence in the adults. Pupils are well looked after and parents are very positive about this aspect of the school's work. A not untypical comment by one parent was, 'The pastoral care of the school is second to none.'

Pupils reach broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science and they achieve well. The level of achievement of pupils between Years 3 and 6 in 2006 was in the top 20% of schools nationally. In English and mathematics it is in the top 10%. Achievement in science is not as good but it is similar to most other schools. Pupils with significant learning difficulties are successfully supported and most of them make very good progress. Pupils from Travellers of Irish heritage families also do well within the school's calm and supportive atmosphere. Good provision in Reception ensures that children make a good start. On entry to school, their attainment is slightly below what is often found, but by the time they start Year 1 they have reached the expected levels. Good teaching and learning, coupled with a good curriculum, ensure that pupils make good progress. Lessons are well planned and meet the needs of pupils. A key strength of the school is the way that lessons are supplemented through a wide range of activities that include sport, music and art. As one parent wrote, 'The school has given my child opportunities to experience activities like seeing ballet and opera.' This commitment to the arts is a key component in making pupils' spiritual and cultural development quite outstanding. Pupils are successfully encouraged to have an expansive view of the world. The work during 'One World Week', for example, reinforces pupils' grasp of the needs of children less fortunate than themselves.

The school is well led and managed. It has benefited from the sustained and steadfast leadership of the headteacher. The vision for the school is firmly based on its religious character, and its mission, 'To raise individuals to distinction' guides much of its work. There are regular checks on teaching and learning and pupils' progress is tracked carefully. The information is used to plan where improvements are required and which pupils may need extra support. The school's evaluation of its own effectiveness is accurate. The teachers responsible for different subjects are not always as familiar with the information about pupil performance as they might be and this slightly hinders their ability to lead improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the level of achievement in science to bring it closer to that in English and mathematics.
- Ensure that all subject leaders are fully familiar with the performance data.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well, and standards are generally in line with the national average. The level of achievement for pupils between Years 3 and 6 has steadily improved over the past three years, particularly in English and mathematics. Achievement in English in 2006 was particularly impressive, with the school being in the top 5% of all schools. Whilst achievement in science is satisfactory, it is lagging slightly behind that in English and mathematics, mainly because it has not benefited from the drive to improve literacy and numeracy. The quality of art throughout the school is particularly high.

The reason why standards did not rise above the national average in 2006 at the end of Year 6 is because the group of pupils who sat the national tests included a significant group who had joined the school between Years 3 and 6. The majority of this group arrived at the school having experienced difficulties in their earlier schooling. The support and help given to these pupils, combined with the impact of the school's pervasively positive ethos, ensured that these pupils thrived and enjoyed considerable success.

Pupils across the school make good progress. The well planned activities in the Reception Year ensure that children successfully acquire early skills in literacy and numeracy. These are built on as pupils move into Years 1 and 2 so that by the time pupils reach the end of Year 2 they are reaching broadly average standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school's commitment to enriching pupils' lives pays real dividends, ensuring that their education is rounded and balanced. A parent commented that 'there is a very good spirit within the children to help each other'. Pupils have a sharp sense of right and wrong and the relationships they enjoy are constructive and beneficial. The religious nature of the school underpins pupils' spiritual development. They have an early understanding of, for example, the beauty of nature and a dimension of life that may be outside of everyday experience. Pupils are very positive about school and enjoy coming. The great majority of pupils attend regularly. Pupils are involved with their local community through fund raising, visiting the local home for the elderly and through the parish.

Pupils are well equipped for the next stage of learning. They have personal attributes that will stand them in good stead in the future and they are successfully developing the skills necessary to succeed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Consistently good teaching underpins pupils' good progress and ensures their good level of achievement. Lessons are well planned and taught within an atmosphere that is very conducive to learning. Pupils respond to the encouragement and support they are given by both their teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils are clear about their learning targets and they feel these help them to 'know what they are doing'. The marking is generally constructive but it

does not always inform pupils enough about what they need to do next to progress towards their targets. The support available for pupils with learning difficulties is effective and helps them to do very well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum offers pupils a good range of experiences and opportunities that enrich learning. Pupils' good progress is due to the carefully planned programme of literacy and numeracy and the range of intervention strategies. These are focused on core skills and support any pupils in danger of not making the progress they should. The science curriculum is satisfactory but there is scope to give pupils more opportunities to record their work outside the confines of worksheets.

The range of activities open to pupils beyond lessons is very good. Sport plays a key role in how the school embraces all pupils by giving every one the chance to represent the school. The work in arts and music are real strengths, with every pupil in Years 3 to 6 learning to play the recorder. The school has anticipated the move for all schools to offer a modern foreign language by teaching French to all pupils in Years 1 to 6. This breadth of experience offered to pupils is a major component in ensuring their very good personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The welfare of pupils is, as one parent wrote, 'paramount and, as a result, our son's life has changed for the better'. It is the interweaving of excellent pastoral support and guidance with the careful thought given to pupils' academic guidance that makes this an outstanding aspect of the school. All the adults know the pupils and there is an overriding concern for the welfare of each individual pupil. The records maintained on pupils with learning difficulties are detailed and assiduously record their progress, both socially and academically. The school has worked hard and successfully to improve attendance levels.

The school takes the right steps to ensure pupils' safety and the most recent requirements to help to protect children are fully in place. The care and support offered to the most vulnerable pupils is also very effective in helping them to do well.

Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully as a series of assessments. The information is used to trigger support programmes and strategies for individuals or groups of pupils. This attention to detail is an important reason why all pupils do well. The older pupils are very familiar with the levels at which they are working and the levels to which they aspire. They regard this as motivating and helpful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides the school with a very strong steer that guides much of its work. There is good sense of teamwork and common purpose amongst the staff. The school knows itself well and maintains a momentum of improvement based on good intelligence gleaned from performance data and checks on teaching and learning. This work helps to sustain what is successful but also results in the steady improvements evident in the past three years. The

subject leaders play a part in the improvement cycle but they could use performance data a little more rigorously to guide and initiate some refinements to work within different subjects. The school has established a successful track record of improvement and its capacity to improve further is self evident.

Governors fulfil their role well. They support the school and are knowledgeable about its qualities and characteristics. They are also instrumental in guiding its progress.

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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>	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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?	1

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	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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Paul's Catholic Primary School, Yate, South Gloucestershire BS37 4EP

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I thoroughly enjoyed my day and particularly liked seeing all the different activities that you were involved in as part of the 'One World Week'. I think that your school is providing you with a good education and all of those pupils I spoke to agree.

Here are the things that I think your school does particularly well.

- It helps you all to achieve well, particularly in English and mathematics.
- You are all very well prepared for the next stages in learning, whether that is the next year group or your next school.
- Lessons are good at helping you to learn and you enjoy the way that teachers make learning interesting and fun.
- You are given lots of different opportunities to do things such as play sport or learn the recorder.
- Everyone in the school takes very good care of you.

To make the school even better I have asked the school to do two things.

- Make sure that you do as well in science as you do in English and mathematics.
- Give those teachers who look after particular subjects the chance to find out even more about how well you are all doing.

Once again, many thanks for giving me such an enjoyable day.

Yours sincerely

David Clegg Lead inspector