



St Louis Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110480
Local Authority Buckinghamshire
Inspection number 288687
Inspection dates 5–6 March 2007
Reporting inspector Olson Davis

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Harris Court
School category	Voluntary aided		Aylesbury
Age range of pupils	4–11		HP20 2XZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01296 488915
Number on roll (school)	208	Fax number	01296 486754
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Andrew Collinson
		Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Louisy
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school serves a generally disadvantaged area. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and for whom English is not their home language are higher than in most schools. Approximately 50% of pupils come from faiths other than Roman Catholicism. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above the national average. The school is part of two learning networks and is part of the Excellence in Aylesbury cluster. There has been a recent high turnover of staff. The school has experienced other staffing difficulties which have adversely affected its financial situation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Louis Catholic Primary is a satisfactory school with some good features. It has strengths in the care provided by all adults and has many positive features that contribute to pupils' good personal development. Pupils make a good start in the Foundation Stage. By the time they reach Year 6 they are confident, mature members of a harmonious community. Pupils enjoy their school and are proud of it. Pupils feel safe and are given good opportunities to take responsibility. As a result they behave well and develop positive attitudes to their work. This in turn contributes to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Parents appreciate this positive aspect of the school's work. As one wrote, 'In my view it is the importance placed on social skills, discipline, good manners and basic respect for others that makes St Louis an outstanding school.'

Achievement is satisfactory and pupils reach average standards. They make steady progress from their starting points. However, too few able pupils reached the higher levels in the Year 2 national assessments in 2006, particularly in writing. At the end of Year 6, more able pupils did better in English and mathematics than in science. The school has made considerable progress since then to raise pupils' achievement. Nonetheless, some more able pupils could still do better and writing remains an area of relative weakness.

Teaching is satisfactory overall and is sometimes good. However, some lessons are not planned with sufficient challenge to stretch the more able pupils and their learning is not moved on swiftly enough. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good because the children are given access to a rich curriculum supported by effective observations, accurate assessments, and strong links with parents and other agencies. As a result, children make good progress in this phase of their education.

The school provides a rich and varied curriculum which is enhanced by a good range of additional activities. Through their active participation in a wide range of sporting activities, pupils develop a good understanding of the benefits of exercise and other aspects of healthy living. Links between subjects make learning more interesting and meaningful for pupils. This adds to pupils' enjoyment of school and their good personal development. Pupils develop sound basic skills which prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership for the school. Despite staffing difficulties and financial problems she has established a shared sense of purpose among staff, strongly focused on raising standards and promoting good standards of care. As a result, there is a common enthusiasm and commitment to pupils achieving well. She has forged excellent links with outside agencies, including local schools, to improve the school's provision for its pupils. Recent initiatives have secured improvement in achievement throughout the school. School self evaluation is good. School leaders know what needs to be done and have clear plans to bring about the desired results.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching challenges more able pupils to achieve as well as they can, particularly in writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and pupils reach broadly average standards. Results in the Year 6 national assessments show that higher attaining pupils do not do well enough in using and applying their scientific knowledge. Specialist teaching involving a local secondary school has helped to raise teachers' expectations of higher attaining pupils in the subject. This is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. The schools' assessment data shows that pupils are well on course to achieve their challenging targets this year in Year 6.

Most children in the Foundation Stage start school with below average attainment, especially in their communication and language and mathematical development. In the past, children made satisfactory progress. Due to improved provision in the Foundation Stage, children are making good progress from their below average starting points with many likely to reach the goals expected of them when they enter Year 1. Pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points at Key Stage 1. Results in the national assessments at Year 2 indicate that too few pupils attained the higher levels in 2006. Current work shows that achievement in Years 1 and 2 is improving. This is because of the school's strong focus on basic skills. Teachers are providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills through drama and discussion in class. However, their writing skills are lagging behind because there are inconsistencies in the challenge of the teaching.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those in the early stages of learning English make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils show respect for each other and support each other well through the 'buddy' system. As a result, pupils feel valued and have a good self-image. They develop confidence and good collaborative skills because teachers provide good opportunities for them to work well with others. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Thoughtful assemblies and time to reflect within lessons support the development of pupils' outstanding spiritual and moral awareness very well. Pupils' excellent cultural development is enhanced by arts and musical activities in school. Pupils enjoy school as demonstrated by their good attendance and punctuality. They behave well and have positive attitudes to their work. Pupils' contributions to the school and to the wider community are good. They take on a range of responsibilities which they carry out diligently. The school council motto 'forget the fuss; talk to us' reflects their sense of responsibility to their peers. As one

member of the council observed, 'We are here to help the school and make the school better'. Pupils are actively involved in raising funds for the school and charities, such as CAFOD. Pupils are developing the sound basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and good personal and social skills that they will need in the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are some clear strengths in teaching across the school despite some inconsistencies. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good. Children make good progress because learning experiences are specifically focused on the needs of each child.

Pupils feel involved in their learning because they are given a clear idea of what they are expected to learn and achieve by the end of the lesson. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good and this helps the children to tackle their work with confidence and enthusiasm. Teachers are making meaningful links between literacy and other subjects to provide pupils with real contexts for their writing. This is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers' make sound use of assessment information to set targets for pupils. This has been helpful to some extent in raising expectations. However, these are still not high enough, particularly for the more able pupils. As a result, some of the activities planned for these pupils do not move their learning on quickly enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum, including that in the Foundation Stage, is good because the school regularly monitors and reviews provision. The school recognises that although provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the last inspection, it is still not at a sufficient level to provide pupils with good opportunities to use their ICT skills across the curriculum. The current emphasis on improving writing skills, science and increasing ICT is evidence that the school is aware of its necessary areas for development. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and the school also provides pupils with a wide range of experiences and opportunities. The curriculum is greatly enhanced by special events, visitors and initiatives such as the Year 6 specialist science support and the Year 5 enrichment programme for more able pupils. Other opportunities allow pupils to experience life in Tudor Times by visiting Sulgrave Manor and acquire life skills at a local health and safety awareness centre. A well-planned programme for personal, social and health education contributes effectively to pupils' good personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Adults look after pupils very well and promote high quality, caring relationships. Pupils have very few concerns about bullying and are confident that the school deals with any incidents effectively. Procedures for child protection, risk assessment and health and safety are rigorous. Pupils feel safe in this secure and supportive environment. There are excellent links with outside agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils are well supported. The learning mentor has been very effective in improving attendance and supporting individual pupils in difficulties. Pupils and their parents appreciate the breakfast club and the nutritious start it gives to the school day. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good as is the provision for pupils whose first language is not English. This ensures that pupils get the additional help they need to make similar progress to their classmates. Teachers are making increasingly effective use of assessment data to track the progress of pupils and to set challenging targets for them. Pupils know their group targets and say that these help them to improve their work. However, some individual targets are not specific enough to identify for more able pupils precisely what they need to do to get to the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, ably supported by her senior leadership team, gives clear direction to the work of the school. Their monitoring of teaching provides teachers with clear targets for improvement and teachers are given specific advice and support to help them improve. Although school self-evaluation is good and has many strengths, the monitoring of teaching has not yet succeeded in removing inconsistencies in teaching. School leaders have identified the key priorities for improvement and have linked their actions to measurable outcomes for pupils. Consequently, the headteacher and governors have a clear idea of the effectiveness of initiatives. Senior leaders have secured good improvement in the teaching of reading and mathematics at Key Stage 1 and the teaching of science and design and technology at Key Stage 2. An initiative to improve attendance has proved particularly successful and is further evidence of the school's good capacity to make further improvements. Issues from the previous inspection have been tackled successfully. Governors are effective. They keep a careful eye on financial resources at a time of budget difficulties for the school. They are well informed about the school's strategic development and provide strong challenge to the school to improve its performance and provision.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	1
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3
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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

My fellow inspector and I visited your school recently to check how well you were getting on. Thank you for being so friendly and making us feel so welcome. We found that your school provides you with a satisfactory education and has some good features.

Here are some of the good things about your school:

- you come to school regularly and the staff take good care of you
- the children in the Foundation Stage do well because they are given interesting activities
- you enjoy your learning and the many activities within the curriculum
- adults help you to keep to the rules and to treat each other properly; as a result you look after each other well and you are making great strides in your personal and social skills
- you are making satisfactory progress in your learning and this is getting better.

There is one thing in particular that we think your school needs to keep working at to make the school better for you:

- make sure that those of you who are good at something are given things to do that are hard enough to help you to get even better, particularly at your writing.

We hope that you will help your teachers as they try to make the school better for you.

Yours sincerely

Olson Davis

Lead Inspector