



# St Sidwell's Church of England Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 113442  
**Local Authority** Devon  
**Inspection number** 289627  
**Inspection date** 19 September 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Lorna Brackstone

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 address</b>	York Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Exeter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-11		EX4 6PG
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01392 255551
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	221	<b>Fax number</b>	01392 255574
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mike Lane
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Anne Hood
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 October 2001		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

This average-sized inner city school, which is very socially and culturally mixed, has just moved into new facilities. The headteacher has been in post for one year. Mobility is high. This is because there are a significant number of minority ethnic families who study or work for short periods at the university or hospital. There are also a significant proportion of pupils who live in temporary social accommodation near the school but are then resettled elsewhere within the city. The proportion of pupils who are using English as an additional language is above average. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties is average. Attainment on entry into the Nursery is very variable but is below the nationally expected level.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Sidwell's is a good school where teaching is good and pupils' achievement is high. Many children start Nursery with poorly developed skills, particularly in speaking and listening, and a large proportion of children use English as an additional language. By the time they leave Year 6, standards are above average, with particular strengths in mathematics and science. Throughout the school, pupils' progress in writing is slower than in mathematics and science because writing skills have not been practised enough when pupils work on other subjects. In response, the school has introduced a new approach to the curriculum where interesting activities are planned across subjects, thus enabling pupils to make connections in their learning.

An outstanding feature of the school is the care, guidance and support it gives pupils. One parent described it as having 'a lovely caring ethos'. Each pupil is tracked in detail and very carefully checked to ensure that they are progressing as well as they should be. Pupils know the targets that they have been set and, as one explained, they 'give you something to work towards'. Pupils with learning difficulties and those for whom English is an additional language are all very well supported through a good mixture of class-based activities and additional help from well-trained staff. Everyone's contribution is equally valued and respected. Consequently, by the end of Year 6, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The personal development of pupils is also outstanding. Spiritual development is excellent, with opportunities never missed for pupils to gain an understanding of the world around them. Attitudes to school are of the highest quality and pupils really enjoy all aspects of school life. Outstanding social and moral development ensures that behaviour is excellent.

The success of the school can be attributed to its good leadership and management. The headteacher has a clear vision that is firmly focused on providing pupils with the best possible quality of education and care. By regularly reviewing all aspects of provision, she has a good understanding of what needs to be done to maintain good quality teaching. For example, achievement in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes) is good because the activities provided are well matched with the needs of the children. However, the pace of progress, whilst satisfactory, is not as quick in Years 1 and 2 as in the rest of the school, and action is being taken to improve teachers' planning in these years.

A particular reason for the success of this school is the close partnership that it develops with other schools, the university, different places of worship and the local community. Parents are very positive about the school and most feel well informed. One parent explained that 'I would have no hesitation in recommending St Sidwell's to any prospective parent'.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing by providing more opportunities for developing these specific skills across the curriculum.

- Ensure that teaching and pupil progress are consistently good throughout the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Attainment on entry into the Nursery is below the nationally expected level. Speaking and listening skills are particularly weak and a large proportion of children start school using English as an additional language. All pupils achieve well by the time they leave the school in Year 6 because individuals are given progress targets and these are regularly tracked. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average in mathematics and science and average in English. The school has identified that greater achievement could be made in Years 1 and 2 and these year groups are being carefully monitored.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Behaviour is exemplary as the pupils move around the school and work hard in lessons. Even whilst the old school building is being bulldozed a few metres away from their classrooms, they concentrate well and enjoy their learning. Attendance is good because there are good systems in place to promote it. The good focus on eating healthy meals and snacks and the daily 'wake up, shake up' sessions ensure that most have a very clear understanding of how to keep healthy and fit. The pupils have an outstanding awareness of cultural diversity and have an excellent understanding of what is right and wrong. They are extremely good at helping their friends in school to be happy and safe and acquire a good social awareness through their involvement in charity events. The school council successfully discusses matters of concern and 'golden heroes' sort out playground problems and ensure that all pupils have someone they can talk to. The pupils confidently express their opinions and explain how much 'they love the feeling' of the new amphitheatre. All this prepares them well as future citizens who can lead a healthy life and be active participants in the culturally diverse society of today. Together with their good academic skills, they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good, particularly in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6. Relationships and teachers' management of pupils' behaviour are very good. The rigorous assessment procedures ensure that learning is carefully monitored and that planning meets the needs of all the pupils. Interesting resources are used to motivate pupils. Learning in Years 3 to 6 moves consistently at a good pace but this has not always been the case in Years 1 and 2, where at times teachers' planning has lacked

rigour. However, recent steps taken to rectify this have brought about satisfactory improvement. There is now a clear focus on improving the quality and consistency of writing across the school. Teachers are secure on how writing skills are taught but its use in the teaching of other subjects is being developed

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is good in the Foundation Stage. It is satisfactory in Years 1 to 6 but is being strengthened by the development of links with other subjects to support the use of writing skills. One pupil explained that this approach is 'helping them learn more'. Activities organised out of school are satisfactory, having been recently hampered by the building project and staff changes. Very good use has been made of the on-site development and demolition to enrich the pupils' learning. Residential trips to Dartmoor and France are very popular and enhance the cultural and social experiences of the pupils.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

As one parent points out, 'the stresses of moving to a new school have been great – but the children's safety and education has always seemed paramount'. This is great credit to the staff, governors and contractors, who have ensured that the pupils have kept safe during the construction of the new facilities. Pupils' pastoral support is excellent with older pupils looking after younger ones or acting as interpreters for those using English as an additional language. Pupils know their academic and personal targets for improvement because they receive very high quality help from their teachers. Most parents feel that the pupils are well supported and guided. One parent explained that 'the staff are always approachable and we have always been well-informed about our children's progress and the running of the school'.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher, the deputy head, the senior leadership team and the governors have a clear focus on raising standards and know the strengths and areas for development. They monitor the work of the school closely. Priorities for improvement are linked closely into performance management programmes and the professional development of all staff. Good links have been established with external agencies and this enables families to gain access to support when required. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<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	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	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>	3
<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.



## 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**

I should like to thank you for the friendly way I was welcomed to your brand new building – just one week old! I was impressed with the way that you and the adults settled in. The highlight of my inspection visit was when we all watched the old bell tower get knocked down and disappear so quickly. Those of you who spoke with me will know that I promised to write and tell you what I thought about the school.

- St Sidwell's is a good school that has some outstanding features. My findings reflect the feelings of many of your parents.
- The school council told me that you feel happy and safe, and understand how to keep healthy and fit. I agree with this and know that this is because the school takes excellent care of you and makes sure you receive outstanding support and guidance.
- You make good progress in school. Your teachers get on very well with you, watch carefully how you work and plan interesting lessons to help you learn.
- Your headteacher, her leadership team and the governors are doing a good job in improving things for you.

During my visit, I noticed that some things could be even better and the school agrees.

- Your skills in writing are not as strong as your skills in other subjects. You could help to improve these by following carefully the advice given by your teachers.
- I have asked your headteacher and her management team to keep checking that all classes get good teaching so that pupils make equally good progress throughout the whole school.