



St Catherine's Catholic Primary School, Wimborne

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113828
Local Authority Dorset
Inspection number 289737
Inspection date 1 November 2006
Reporting inspector Michael Burghart

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Cutlers Place
School category	Voluntary aided		Colehill
Age range of pupils	4-11		Wimborne BH21 2HN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01202 883763
Number on roll (school)	179	Fax number	01202 883763
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	P Baldwin
		Headteacher	Halina Richards
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school on the outskirts of a market town. Pupils come from a wide area with many parents choosing St Catherine's because of its Catholic nature. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is about average. All children have attended some kind of pre-school setting (many at the on-site kindergarten) before they join Reception. Their attainment on entry is above average. Virtually all pupils are of White British origin.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Pupils and staff enjoy working here. There is very successful teamwork at all levels and a very strong ethos rooted in the conviction that everyone matters. The school is true to its stated Catholic aims and very successfully encourages pupils to be sensitive to other people.

Standards are consistently high with pupils of all abilities making excellent progress and achieving particularly well. The value that the school adds to pupils' performance regularly places it in the top five percent of primary schools nationally. This is the direct result of high quality teaching and support. Staff make especially good use of assessment information to measure success and challenge pupils to do even better. With recent improvements to music and sporting opportunities, the curriculum is now outstanding. This, together with extremely effective care and academic guidance, very successfully supports excellent personal development as well as underpinning pupils' learning. Because pupils feel valued, and work is interesting and well matched to their needs, behaviour is excellent and attendance well above average. Through detailed planning the school ensures that pupils understand how to stay safe and healthy. Very good attention to basic skills, and how to use these in activities such as problem solving, prepares pupils well for the future.

Progress is good rather than outstanding in Reception because the lack of space indoors and outside restricts children's development. The school's excellent self-evaluation has identified this. As a result, planning and funding are in place for imminent improvements to accommodation to support the Foundation Stage curriculum. This is an example of how outstanding leadership and management are taking the school forward. The headteacher very effectively involves staff and governors in the process of monitoring, evaluating and planning for development. This plays a major part in ensuring that pupils' strong performance is sustained. The school's track record of continual improvement is very good and its potential to go even further, based on procedures already in place, is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision for the Reception Year in terms of the quality and amount of space available, especially outdoors.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils consistently reach standards that are well above average. Their achievement is outstanding and this has been sustained over the past three years. Progress in Reception is good and builds successfully on what children already know and can do, although in some areas of learning, such as physical and creative development, it is limited by the space available. Progress is very good throughout Years 1 and 2 and lays a very secure basis for outstanding progress by the end of Year 6. The school does

very well compared with all primaries for the value it adds to pupils' achievements but is in no way complacent. Each year it sets and achieves even more challenging targets. For example, although boys do well in writing the school has identified that they could do even better and has successfully introduced new initiatives to help them make the most of their skills.

Pupils with learning difficulties do very well and most reach at least average levels of 7 and 11 year olds. Higher attaining pupils consistently attain above average levels, with girls and boys doing equally well. The school's performance is significantly better than average in English, mathematics and science, with particular strengths in reading, oral communication skills and problem solving.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Their cultural development is good and they have, for example, a keen awareness of how different faiths worship. Pupils are extremely considerate of other people's views and show a very well developed sense of fair play. They know what is right and are prepared to stand up for their ideals. The school council is a very good vehicle for pupils to develop community involvement and the initiative pupils show in terms of fund raising for those less fortunate than themselves does them credit. There is a keen commitment to being healthy in terms of diet and exercise. 'That was fun!' was one girl's comment on 'Wake up and Shake Up' activities which happen every morning. This clearly reflects the enthusiasm pupils show for just about everything in school. Pupils show a good awareness of safe practices and clearly feel safe in school. Their confidence in expressing themselves and being prepared to learn from making mistakes is a very good testament to the quality of relationships and the ethos of trust. Well above average basic skills and good problem solving set pupils up for later life. However, information and communication technology (ICT) resources, which are nearing the end of their usefulness, are beginning to have a restricting effect from this point of view.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Learning is outstanding because teaching is consistently good and very effectively challenges pupils to do their best. Much improved assessment, translated into targets to show pupils what to do next to improve their work, is fundamental to the school's success. There is a whole-staff commitment to making improvements, notwithstanding that standards and pupils' achievements are already significantly above average. Excellent relationships, very good planning, which clearly identifies objectives, and questioning, which requires pupils to reason things out, are typical in all classes. Teachers are particularly well supported by well qualified assistants who are effectively

briefed as full members of the team. Teaching has been improved since the last inspection as a result of honest monitoring by senior managers. Documentation shows that strengths are celebrated and weaknesses are systematically addressed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is relevant to pupils' needs and caters equally well for those with learning difficulties and those who are potentially higher attainers. It has been enhanced by the specialist teaching for music, French, science (introduced in 1996) and sport, and by virtue of strong links with the kindergarten and secondary schools. There are good enrichment opportunities which benefit pupils' personal as well as academic development in 'out of school' activities. These include strong links with the Church, an impressive range of visits and visitors, and several residential trips. The pupils are looking forward to the newly planned after school clubs. They are very pleased that their suggestions for improvements to the already good school environment have been taken on board.

Pupils make excellent progress partly because they enjoy the topic work approach. Teachers make especially good use of opportunities to develop and use basic literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. An excellent example of innovation is in the school's approach to developing literacy teaching. By providing pupils with more time to extend their writing, pupils are able to work on specific aspects identified in teachers' high quality marking.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There are excellent procedures which ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for. Links with parents are strong and have been considerably enhanced by the setting up of a parents' council with representatives from each class. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, especially in terms of its Christian ethos and the care and support it gives their children. 'My children have been nurtured, made good progress and had great fun,' is typical of parents' comments.

Staff know pupils well. Their commitment to helping pupils to develop as individuals, as well as supporting academic achievement, is very effective. High standards in personal development and in English, mathematics and science are characteristic of the school's success. That staff are not content to rest on their laurels is clear in intentions to take the already outstanding assessment system into a further dimension. Work is in hand to make more use of ICT to analyse trends as well as confirming targets for individual pupils. 'We want to see that it is even better!' was a comment from teachers and this they applied to many aspects of the school's work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management ensure that high quality provision enables pupils to reach well above average standards and make excellent progress. The headteacher, together with the governors, very effectively manages staff as an excellent team. The school's self-evaluation is thorough and accurately identifies what needs to be done as well as showing what is going well. It is securely based on first hand observation and monitoring the success of decisions made. Subject leaders make a strong contribution to school development through their action plans for each curriculum area. Governors ensure that there are well defined links between what is desirable and what is financially possible. That much needed improvements to accommodation for reception children and to ICT resources for all pupils are on the way, is a credit to senior managers' persistence. This is an example of the school's excellent capacity to continue improvements.

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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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Thank you for your warm welcome. I really appreciated your politeness and excellent behaviour. It is obvious that you enjoy school and I can see why. St Catherine's is what adults call 'outstanding'. This means that it is exceptionally good at helping you to reach high standards, whilst making learning interesting and enjoyable.

Here are some of the many highlights:

- Teachers and their assistants are extremely good at helping you to make excellent progress and making sure that you are becoming sensible, caring young people.
- The school takes very good care of you. Teachers mark your work very well to show you how you can improve.
- The school is well run by the headteacher, staff and governors working as an excellent team.

In order to be even better the school needs to give reception children more classroom and outdoor space to learn and play in.

Your positive attitudes show that you will go on working hard. I know you will make the most of going to such a happy school.