

St Catharine's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115705
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	290306
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Peter Limm HMI

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	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Myra Whitehouse
Headteacher	M J Sessarego
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2002
School address	Lower High Street Chipping Campden GL55 6DZ
Telephone number	01386 840677
Fax number	01386 840677

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2007
Inspection number	290306

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Catharine's Roman Catholic Primary School is smaller than average though numbers are rising. It is housed in a listed building in the heart of Chipping Campden. The school draws pupils from the town and surrounding villages. Many come from socially advantaged backgrounds. Children enter the school with above average standards, although this varies from year to year and there is a full range of ability in each year group. There is one pupil for whom English is an additional language. Very few pupils are entitled to free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average and none of these has a statement of special educational need. There is an After School Club providing out-of-school care for 24 pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Catharine's is an outstanding school. As one parent commented, 'there is huge love and care at St Catharine's', and another echoed this by writing 'it is a fantastic school'. At its heart lies a clear commitment to Catholic values. Pupils feel safe, welcomed and cared for, and their attendance is excellent. They thoroughly enjoy their lessons and make excellent progress in their personal development and well-being. In so many ways, the pupils provide the best evidence of how well the school prepares them for the future. They are confident, articulate, enthusiastic and extremely well behaved young people. They feel the school listens to their well-considered views and ideas and they contribute directly to key school developments. Some parents commented how their children had blossomed at St Catharine's after experiencing difficulties in previous schools. The After School Club provides good care and support for an increasing number of pupils who need to remain at school at the end of the day.

The school provides an excellent learning environment in which pupils are able to flourish. Information and communication technology (ICT) has been developed well since the last inspection and all pupils have access to excellent facilities. Pupils start school with levels of knowledge and skills that are above average. They get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage and are prepared well for more difficult learning in Year 1, although the school recognises that planning does not yet ensure a good balance of structured play and teacher-led activities. As a result of the extremely high quality of the school's provision and their own excellent attitudes to learning, pupils make outstanding progress during their time in the school. At each key stage, standards are consistently and significantly above the national and local authority (LA) averages, even allowing for the level of attainment on entry. The school has put in place rigorous strategies to improve the attainment of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It has also focused well on developing pupils' writing skills. Inspection evidence confirms that these strategies are having a positive impact on the work of those pupils whose achievement needed to improve.

The care, guidance and support the pupils receive are also outstanding. Procedures for keeping safe are robust and the school promotes pupils' welfare very well. Pupils spoke knowledgeably about their targets and how these were arrived at. They had a good understanding of what they needed to do to achieve them.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Pupils experience an excellent range of interesting activities to help them learn, including the use of resources such as drums in music. The rich curriculum makes excellent provision for music, drama and after-school activities such as sport. The school accurately identifies that pupils are not always given enough opportunities to develop their critical thinking skills.

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. He works in close partnership with a dedicated and talented staff to ensure that pupils develop a real love of learning. A real strength of the school is the high quality of teamwork and commitment which ensures that everyone plays a key role in moving the school forward. Each member of staff feels encouraged to develop their ideas and take responsibility for leading them to fruition. There is constant debate about what is best for the pupils. In this process, the governors provide an excellent balance of support and challenge to ensure progress is as good as it should be.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their critical thinking skills.
- Plan a better balance of structured play and teacher-led activities in the Foundation Stage.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The pupils' achievements and the standards of their work are outstanding. Most pupils start school with skills and abilities that are higher than those of a typical four-year-old but the rate of progress through the school means that pupils build very well on what they know and can do already. This leads to very high standards by the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make excellent progress and reach standards that are much higher than those of similar pupils nationally. The school regularly meets its challenging targets and prepares its pupils very well for the next stage of their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Music and assemblies make a very strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual and cultural development. The caring and strong Christian ethos is successfully promoted and clearly reflected in every aspect of school life. Pupils' great enjoyment of school is evident in their very enthusiastic approach to learning and their above average attendance rates. One parent commented, 'My child thrives at school and is keen to learn.' Behaviour is excellent and pupils have an extremely good understanding of right and wrong. They say they feel safe and happy in school and are confident about approaching an adult if they have a concern. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise, well attended sporting activities and eating a range of good food. Pupils have a strong respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others, as seen by the positive way they listened to each other, responded and asked questions in the school council meeting. Pupils thoroughly enjoy taking responsibilities within the school, and this contributes extremely well to their personal and social development. They greatly appreciate the many fundraising activities the school is involved in. They participate enthusiastically and most successfully in a variety of local events. Pupils feel that they have a strong voice in decision making, particularly through the very active school council. Their very high standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT, and the many valuable opportunities provided to use their initiative, work in teams and support one another, ensure that they are very well prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Exceptionally good teaching, valued greatly by parents, has a significant impact on pupils' very high level of attainment throughout the school and the excellent progress they make. Teachers plan lessons carefully to take account of the different age groups and individual needs of the pupils. In the Foundation Stage, teacher-led activities tend to dominate at the expense of structured play, but generally in the school excellent relationships and outstanding class management ensure that all pupils work productively both on their own and in groups. Pupils

are very enthusiastic about learning and exceptionally well behaved in lessons. Teachers make imaginative use of resources, such as interactive whiteboards, to produce challenging lessons that stimulate a desire to learn. Teachers ensure that pupils are fully aware of what is expected during lessons and have a clear picture of the progress they have made. They provide them with constructive advice about how to improve their work. There are excellent links across the curriculum, so that literacy, music and ICT, for example, support other subjects well. There are rigorous procedures to assess pupils' progress and identify weaknesses in learning. Teachers make very good use of assessment information to set targets for the next steps of pupils' learning and to keep them well informed about their progress. They work very effectively with teaching assistants who skilfully support individuals to improve their work, including those who find learning difficult.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum meets the pupils' needs and aspirations very well and enables them to make excellent progress, both academically and in their personal development. There is a wide range of activities for pupils to take part in after school, including many sports clubs. The After School Club provides good care for the increasing number of pupils it caters for. The pupils spoke animatedly about their musical and dramatic experiences. Music and drama are real strengths in the school and the school contributes extremely well to the local music festival and concerts. Set against this, inspectors agreed with pupils that there should be more opportunities for them to develop their critical thinking and problem solving skills. There are growing links with other schools to provide good joint activities for gifted and talented pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's extremely caring ethos means that pupils are valued as individuals. As a consequence, pupils thrive and develop into confident young people. Teachers know their pupils well as individuals, and parents are confident that their children are well cared for and that the school will deal effectively with any worries or concerns. One parent reflected by commenting that 'My child, and all children, are valued individuals who make an important contribution to the school as a whole.' Incidents of bullying are very rare and there are good procedures to deal with any, should they occur. Arrangements for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare, including child protection arrangements and risk assessments, are strong. There is a robust system for checking and recording how well pupils are doing and for tracking their performance over time, enabling staff to quickly identify any pupils who may be falling behind and put in place very skilful and thorough support. Their progress is reviewed regularly with their teachers and parents. Assessments are frequent, thorough and accurate. Pupils are given individual targets in reading, writing and mathematics that show them what they need to focus on to do even better. The very good induction procedures and transfer arrangements mean that pupils are confident about their ability to cope with new situations.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding because there is a clear focus on maintaining and improving already high standards as well as promoting the personal development and well-being

of pupils. The headteacher provides strong, clear-sighted leadership which enthuses the staff and impresses parents. He knows the school's strengths and weaknesses very well and this is evident in the school's accurate self-evaluation. Excellent systems are in place to provide regular monitoring of all that goes on and these are supplemented by many high quality day-to-day informal discussions and debates about school improvement. The planning process takes very careful account of the views of pupils and parents. Issues relating to the last inspection have been addressed successfully. Governors are very supportive and have an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They take a full part in monitoring and evaluating the impact of initiatives. The school is keen to improve further and the success of the recent drive to improve writing has helped more pupils to achieve the higher levels in national tests at the end of Year 6. This is just one way the school demonstrates its excellent capacity to improve still further. It is little wonder the school is supported very well by parents.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------

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	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	1

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.

Annex A

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

12 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Catharine's Roman Catholic Primary School, Chipping Campden, GL55 6DZ

Thank you all for taking part in our recent inspection of your school. Special thanks to the pupils who talked to us about their experiences and their work. We particularly enjoyed your assembly and singing.

You told us you thought your school was 'fun' and special and we agree. It is outstanding. You make excellent progress because you work very hard. You behave extremely well and speak confidently and clearly about your time at the school. All the staff look after you very well and make you feel happy and safe. The teaching in your school is excellent and one of you thought he did not have any favourite lessons because they were all equally good! You have an excellent headteacher who is helped very well by governors and your parents.

There is very little that needs to change in your school, but we agreed with you that you need more opportunities to use your thinking skills and think through problems. Also, we thought those of you in your first year could do with more play! You can all help your school by telling your teachers more about what you think could be done to ensure the school continues to be so successful.

We hope you all keep on enjoying school and wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm Her Majesty's Inspector