

# St Catherine's Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117410
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE
<b>Inspection number</b>	290826
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 September 2006
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Martin Beale

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 category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	162
School	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr H Ritchie
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs C Clarke
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 May 2001
<b>School address</b>	Park Road Ware Hertfordshire SG12 0AW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01920 462653
<b>Fax number</b>	01920 485810

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Catherine's is an average sized Church of England voluntary controlled primary school with a part-time Nursery. All but a very few pupils are of white British heritage. Free school meal entitlement is average. Attainment on entry fluctuates but is broadly average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The education provided by St Catherine's has declined in recent years and it is now inadequate. Pupils are not achieving all that they should, largely because of the failure of senior leaders to recognise and tackle shortcomings in teaching in Years 3 to 6.

Weaknesses in pupils' achievement identified by the 2001 inspection have not all been remedied and other aspects have deteriorated. Teaching has declined from good to inadequate. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors do not have a clear picture of the school's position and what needs to be done to improve the quality of education. The school is inadequately led and managed. The school's evaluation of information, gathered through its quite systematic monitoring procedures, is over generous. It is not accurate enough to form a secure basis from which to plan to improve pupils' achievement. Governors do not have a clear understanding of the school's problems. They do not probe senior leaders to explain why pupils are underachieving or challenge them to do better. Taking into account the school's recent track record, it does not currently have the capacity to improve and provides inadequate value for money.

The school's judgement of good pupil achievement is far from the actual evidence of test and school assessment data as well as work in books and lessons. All show much underachievement. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. Standards by Year 2 are average, but have shown no significant change since the last inspection. At the end of Key Stage 2, reasonable numbers of pupils reach standards expected nationally for their age, but overall standards are below average and have declined over the last three years, as has pupil achievement. Few pupils exceed national expectations other than in English in 2006. Pupils are not making sufficient progress in mathematics and standards by Year 6 have fallen sharply and are low. Science standards remain considerably below average, as they were at the last inspection and there is much evidence that pupils are not achieving all that they might. Pupils' writing, also a weakness at the last inspection, has shown little improvement and standards are also below average.

The school's view that its teaching is good is considerably inflated. Senior leaders are not linking the quality of teaching with evidence that pupils are not making sufficient progress in Years 3 to 6. Teaching is not consistently of the quality in these years to enable pupils to make progress at the rate of which they are capable. More able pupils in particular are not being extended and the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are not being met consistently by teachers. The systematic use of assessment information is enabling the school to track pupils' progress and adopt effective intervention programmes whenever average attaining pupils are identified as falling behind standards expected for their age, but not quickly enough when the more able are underachieving. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are suitably identified and careful records kept. Appropriate individual education plans are available, but these are not used adequately by teachers to ensure that pupils are provided with work that is consistently appropriate to their needs.

The youngest children make a good start to their school life in the Nursery and Reception class. Most progress well and reach the standards expected of them by the time they enter Year 1.

They settle into school well, and enjoy the experience. They benefit from the good range of activities and experiences that the adults arrange for them. They readily respond to the work, and become confident in carrying out tasks independently. The children are well behaved and the adults ensure their health and safety at all times.

Parents are generally supportive of the school and what it does for their children. The care, guidance and support their children receive are satisfactory. Members of staff ensure that there is effective pastoral care and that the pupils' welfare is of paramount importance. This contributes considerably to their personal development, but not sufficiently to their academic progress. Pupils are aware of the need to adopt healthy life-styles. They readily explain what constitutes a healthy diet, and they recognise the importance of physical activity. They much appreciate the range of clubs provided by the school. Responsibilities are taken on willingly and conscientiously, and the school council has been active in helping to improve playground resources. There is a suitably wide range of links with the community, such as when the choir regularly performs at various events. The school provides pupils with opportunities to work together, and it also allows them to develop their self-confidence. These are important workplace skills but the underachievement in writing and mathematics means that preparation for the next stage of education and later life is no better than satisfactory.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that all teachers make full use of assessment data in their planning so that their teaching is well matched to pupils' individual needs.
- Raise expectations of pupils' achievement in mathematics and science by introducing a rigorous programme to improve the quality of teaching in both subjects.
- Raise the quality of pupils' writing and reinforce the development of writing skills in all subjects.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels and develop a more rigorous approach to self-evaluation that focuses on how pupils' achievement can be improved.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 4**

Pupils do not make sufficient progress while at the school. Many reach nationally expected standards by the time they leave for secondary school, although relatively few exceed these levels other than in English. There is underachievement amongst groups of pupils. More able pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities do not consistently achieve the standards of which they are capable. While individual targets are challenging, they are not always achieved in writing, mathematics and science. Standards in reading improved considerably in the last year. This accounted for the rise in English test results for Year 6 pupils in 2006 and reduced the underachievement seen in English by the 2005 cohort.

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

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, with a strength being in the way pupils relate to each other. Younger pupils say that they greatly enjoy the company of pupils from Years 5 and 6. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory, and they enjoy coming to school. They are polite, courteous and behave well in lessons and around the school. They work and play well together, making the school a happy place for them to be in. Pupils say that they feel safe in school, and they report

that any bullying is dealt with quickly. Pupils are confident that they have an adult to turn to if they are worried.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 4**

Pupils respond well to the teaching in most classes and to the consistent expectations of teachers for their behaviour. Expectations of their learning are less clear because teachers do not consistently use their assessment of what the pupils can do to plan activities and adopt appropriate methods to support learning. There are times when work given is unrealistically hard and others when it is routine. Pupils are not always sure what is expected from them in a particular task. Teachers do not always mark work thoroughly enough so that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve. Teaching is made more interesting and learning benefits considerably from the use by teachers of the school's interactive whiteboards. Teaching assistants are deployed well and are effective in the support they provide for different groups of pupils.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The satisfactory curriculum meets statutory requirements and enables pupils to foster their personal well-being in interesting ways. Pupils say they enjoy what the school has to offer. Visits and visitors, plus a range of clubs, enhance their learning effectively and encourage positive attitudes. Programmes designed for pupils who have fallen behind in their basic literacy skills are effective in helping them to catch up. Basic skills such as reading and information and communication (ICT) skills are promoted well across a range of subjects. However, the same is not the case for writing and numeracy.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

School procedures ensure that pupils work in a safe, secure and clean environment. Child protection procedures are good, and members of staff are alert to any signs that a pupil might be distressed or anxious. Safety checks and risk assessments are routinely carried out. Pupils are taught about the importance of healthy living, and they are regularly reminded of the need to take care, such as when doing physical education. Pupils have targets for improving their work. However, discussions with pupils suggest that they are not always clear enough about what they need to do to make their work better.

## **Leadership and management**

#### **Grade: 4**

Ineffective leadership and management have resulted in the school failing to meet the needs of pupils and falling behind other primary schools in many areas of its work. Senior staff and subject leaders are conscientious, but they generally do not have enough expertise to carry out their leadership and management roles effectively. In particular, their lack of understanding of data relating to pupils' achievement has severely limited their ability to stem the fall in standards. Furthermore, governors are not adequately informed about the implications of test

and other assessment data to enable them to recognise the school's precarious position and hold it to account.

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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>	<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>	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	4
<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>	3

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

25 September 2006

Dear Pupils

St Catherine's Church of England Primary School Park Road Ware Hertfordshire SG12 0AW

I am writing to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. You were all very kind and helpful to us and showed how proud you are of your school. We enjoyed talking to you and your teachers and watching you learn. You were very willing to answer our questions and show us your work. From our conversations with you and from the questionnaires we received from parents, we know that most of you enjoy school. You are polite and keen to take part in school life.

We recognise that St Catherine's does some things well but some important areas need to be improved. For this reason we have decided that your school requires help to improve. Some of the teaching has not been good enough and this has led to you not making the progress of which you are capable. Teachers have not always marked your work thoroughly enough so that you are clear about what you need to do to improve. We think you should all be achieving more in writing, mathematics and science although your reading has improved considerably.

We know that the adults in the school work hard to care for you. Much effort has been made to improve the resources such as the interactive whiteboards, which benefit your learning considerably. We are sure that the staff will do their best during the coming months to improve the school. They will be helped to carry out these improvements and inspectors will visit the school regularly to check the progress the school is making.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale Lead inspector