



# St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117571  
**Local Authority** HERTFORDSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 290875  
**Inspection dates** 8–9 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Jackie Cousins

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Horseshoe Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Garston, Watford
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Hertfordshire WD25 7HP
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01923676022
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	197	<b>Fax number</b>	01923893497
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Father Christopher Hamilton - Gray
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Pauline Curran
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 May 2001		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
4–11	8–9 November 2006	290875

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school to the north of Watford. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds with few from minority ethnic groups. Few pupils are in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. Most pupils start at school with levels of knowledge and understanding that are in line with expectations. An average proportion of pupils joins or leaves the school part way through the school year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is average. The percentage of pupils entitled to claim free school meals is below average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary is a good school that provides good value for money. Pupils' achieve well because teaching is effective and learning is enjoyable. From a broadly average starting point pupils make good progress and standards are above average by Year 6. Pupils are prepared well for their next stage of education because of the good level of skill they have in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). More able pupils are satisfactorily challenged in English and mathematics but the proportion of pupils in Year 6 who attain the highest level in science is below average. Pupils get off to a good start to their education in the Reception class because of effective provision.

A particular strength of the school is pupils' personal development, which is good. This is mainly because of the effective care, guidance and support the school provides. One parent said the school has, 'A warm and welcoming environment in which we know our children will flourish'. Pupils' enjoyment in their learning is evident in lessons and when talking to them. The pupils enthusiastically discuss the activities they like doing. One pupil said she really enjoyed, 'Everything about school'. Pupils behave well as a result of effective arrangements to promote good behaviour and discipline. Pupils contribute much to the community, such as when the school choir went to sing to some local elderly people. The older pupils look after the young ones in many ways, for example, when they walk to the church. Although most pupils have personal targets for their academic work a significant number do not have well developed self-evaluation skills and so they are not always clear about how to work at higher levels of attainment.

Teaching and learning are good. This is mainly because teachers have high expectations of pupils. Effective teaching methods enable pupils to link and apply their knowledge from one subject to another. Teachers use resources well, including ICT, to make lessons interesting. Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities are supported effectively and so they make good progress. Teaching assistants are employed very productively in most classes. Teachers use assessment well. Pupils' achievement is tracked effectively from the Reception class to Year 6. Careful planning means that pupils learn to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. A good selection of clubs and enrichment activities are on offer.

Self-evaluation is used well, especially by the headteacher and senior management team, and this has brought about several improvements since the last inspection. Standards by the end of Foundation Stage are slightly above average. Teachers' marking informs pupils effectively about the strengths and areas for development in their work. As a result of all these improvements the school has a good capacity to improve further. The school's leadership has established an effective partnership with parents, other agencies and the local secondary school. The strong partnership with the local secondary school allows pupils in Year 5 to develop their ICT skills well. One parent wrote, 'It is an extremely well led school and all staff I have come into contact with have been approachable, friendly and professional'.

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

- Improve the proportion of Year 6 pupils who attain the highest level in science tests.
- Develop pupils' use of self-evaluation.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' achievement is good. Most pupils start at school with levels of knowledge and understanding that broadly match expectations. Pupils make good progress in the Reception class and so standards are slightly above average by the start of Year 1.

Pupils progress well in Years 1 and 2 and attain standards that are above average by the start of Year 3. This is partly because of teachers' very effective use of teaching assistants and voluntary helpers.

Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is also good. These pupils entered Year 3 with average levels of knowledge and so they have made good progress to attain above average standards by Year 6 in 2006. The school's challenging targets were met. Over the last five years the school has maintained consistently good standards apart from in 2005. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve well. Gifted and talented pupils are provided for satisfactorily but more pupils are capable of attaining the highest level in science tests.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good because the school successfully promotes positive attitudes. Attendance is above average. Pupils 'look out for one another'. For example, Year 6 act as buddies to the pupils in Reception. Most pupils act safely and considerately around school. They show a good grasp of how to live healthily. Many contribute to school life and promote charitable causes through the school council. Because the council meets frequently, it helps representatives to become particularly confident in expressing views and listening to others. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They use time for reflection well and are happy to offer their own prayers in class. They show good knowledge of cultures other than their own and are respectful of them. Pupils' skills in evaluating their own successes and ways to improve their work are at an early stage of development.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. High expectations of teachers coupled with sessions which structure pupils' learning well mean pupils attain good levels of expertise in key skills such as literacy and numeracy. Lessons are planned well so that time is used effectively in most sessions. Good questioning by teachers ensures that pupils think deeply about their learning. The skilled use of open-ended questions and paired discussion times encourages pupils to express their thinking. What pupils are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson is not often shared or discussed in depth with pupils. A good programme is in use for assessment which means that all key areas of learning are regularly evaluated. Individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities contain good specific and measurable targets which effectively guide the work of teachers and teaching assistants.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school's good curriculum helps promote effective progress. Its impact has recently improved. At the time of the previous inspection, for example, literacy and numeracy were insufficiently supported by teaching in other subjects. Now, vocabulary, writing styles and sentence structure are regularly reinforced across the curriculum. Support staff stay with the same class throughout the day, enabling them to help teachers modify topics in the light of earlier learning. Good planning as well as continuity of support staff ensures that the curriculum meets the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Science teachers realise the need to expand investigative work; the process has begun and is showing some immediate benefits, but is by no means complete. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities which together help promote pupils' good personal development.

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

#### **Grade: 2**

The school offers good care, guidance and support to its pupils. This is evident in the ethos of the school and in the attitudes of staff. Pupils' personal needs continued to be well looked after as they were in the previous inspection, but the school now provides good systems for supporting their academic progress as well. The recent improvements in sharing assessment data are giving teachers good information about pupils' past performance and future targets. It is helping promote better progress as a result. However, not all pupils are as clear as they could be about how high they should aim or how to improve their performance. Pupils' personal and academic progress is reviewed regularly and with strong parental involvement. Their transition from Nursery and from Year 6 to secondary school is handled efficiently. All current requirements for safeguarding pupils' welfare are in place.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Effective leadership and management have ensured that this school has made good improvement since the last inspection. All areas for development from the last inspection have been addressed effectively. The school evaluates its provision well and is always looking for ways to improve. The school improvement plan is driving development but it does not consistently show how success will be measured. The leadership and management of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities are good. Pupils who experience some difficulties in their studies are very carefully assessed and monitored. Programmes of work support these pupils well. Coordinators of literacy and mathematics monitor pupils' progress effectively from the Reception class to Year 6. The new coordinator of science has made a positive start in monitoring standards.

Good governance assists the school to manage change well. The chairman of the governors monitors standards particularly carefully and other governors have good involvement in the school's self-evaluation process. Finances are closely monitored and managed so that the school provides good value for money.





## 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>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	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>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<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

10 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Horseshoe Lane, Garston, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD25 7HP

Thank you for helping me find out about your school. I enjoyed watching lessons and talking to you. It was interesting to talk to your teachers and one of the governors. You are lucky to attend such a super school. Good things about your school include that:

- you do well in Year 6 English and mathematics tests
- you work hard in lessons
- your behaviour is good
- your headteacher and senior teachers have effective ideas about ways to improve the school
- teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and challenging
- teachers and staff care for you well
- older pupils look after younger ones very well.

I have asked your school to look at how they can make things even better. I hope that you will help teachers by listening to them carefully. The most important things are:

- improving the number of Year 6 pupils who get really good marks in science tests
- making sure you know how much you have learnt in each lesson.

Keep working hard and enjoying the many things you do at St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Jackie Cousins

Lead inspector