



St Richard's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118771
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291249
Inspection dates 9–10 November 2006
Reporting inspector Alexander Paul Baxter

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Castle Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Dover
Age range of pupils	4–11		CT16 1EZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01304 201118
Number on roll (school)	196	Fax number	01304 201118
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Christopher Wild
		Headteacher	Stephen D Grant
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 9–10 November 2006	Inspection number 291249
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is of average size. About three quarters of the pupils are of the Catholic faith. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational need is below average. The proportion of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English is also average. Children's attainment on entry is slightly lower than the level expected for their age and varies from year to year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school does not provide an adequate education for its pupils and gives unsatisfactory value for money. Improved standards in 2005 in Year 6 have not been sustained this year. Overall standards have fallen since the last inspection and are well below average, especially in writing and mathematics. Pupils' achievement is inadequate. Even though there has been some improvement in teaching and learning and the curriculum this term, progress over time is unsatisfactory. At times too many pupils are still not engaged actively enough or with enjoyment in lessons and this holds back their progress. Assessments are not used sufficiently to ensure that work is closely matched to pupils' ability and to make it clear what they need to do to improve. Consequently, teaching and learning are inadequate.

The headteacher's commitment to the caring Catholic ethos is supported and valued by the whole school community. This underpins good pastoral care and promotes pupils' personal qualities, especially their good behaviour and considerate relationships. Parents showed strong agreement when they said, 'Children are safe and well cared for'. Support for the most vulnerable pupils is particularly effective. Most pupils enjoy school and have a good understanding of healthy, safe living, but many lack sufficient skills for the next stage of their schooling. Overall, the pupils' personal development, curricular provision and care, guidance and support are satisfactory.

Leadership and management are inadequate. Leaders and managers do not have an accurate view of the school's performance, especially the impact on pupils' academic achievements. Consequently, they have an overgenerous view of its effectiveness. This is largely because decisions are not informed by rigorous and accurate evaluations of their impact on pupils' progress. Most strategies introduced to promote improvement generally lack a sharp enough focus on standards and are ineffective.

Most children start school in Reception with skills that are slightly below those seen nationally. Provision is satisfactory in this Foundation Stage class and children make sound progress. However, as they move through Key Stages 1 and 2, national and school assessments show that progress becomes inconsistent. Standards, especially in writing and mathematics, are mostly below average in Year 2 and well below average at Year 6. Too many pupils are not attaining high enough standards and overall achievement is inadequate.

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.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards, especially in mathematics and writing.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management.

- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching, improving particularly the way teachers engage pupils' interest and make learning relevant to the needs of individual pupils.
- Implement rigorous and robust procedures for assessing pupils' progress so that pupils and staff have an accurate understanding of how pupils are doing and know what needs to be done to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards are well below average in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 and pupils' achievement is inadequate.

Children have slightly below average ability when they start school. They make satisfactory progress in the Reception class and make most gains in their personal, social, emotional and physical development. Most children reach average standards for their age by the time they enter Year 1. In Years 1 and 2, many pupils underachieve in writing and mathematics. Standards are below average in Year 2, except in reading and science where they are average. Achievement remains unsatisfactory in writing and mathematics through Years 3 to 6. Standards in reading improved in Year 3 in 2006 and progress is better in science in some classes. In mathematics, there are weaknesses in basic numeracy skills and in the ability to apply them to real everyday tasks. In writing, pupils have not been encouraged enough to develop their own ideas and to use a more imaginative range of words from an early age. The current work of pupils in Years 1 to 6, and the 2007 Year 6 targets show that achievement is not improving quickly enough. Pupils with learning difficulties, including a few with English as a second language, generally make satisfactory progress in relation to their capabilities. This is because most receive additional adult support and have their needs assessed effectively.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils enjoy coming to school and behave well. The caring Catholic ethos helps them to be well mannered and friendly and to feel safe and secure. Close links with the Catholic Church also contribute to the pupils' good moral and social development. Spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils' enjoyment of learning is constrained when they have to sit and listen for too long in some lessons. Attendance is broadly average, but a few pupils have too many absences and this has an adverse impact on their achievement.

Pupils take part in fundraising and work with people in need in the local community. They welcome responsibility, for example the 'Buddy System' where Year 6 pupils support Reception children. The school council has contributed well in previous years, but newly appointed members have not yet been able to contribute. The pupils' basic

skills are not good enough to equip them sufficiently for the later stages of their education. Pupils have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles. Typically one of the youngest children said, 'Fruit makes you big and strong because of the vitamins, but chocolate rots your teeth'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate overall. Although improved compared to the recent past, gaps in pupils' skills and significant underachievement stem from weaknesses in teaching. Assessment is not used effectively to ensure pupils' progress and to make sure that they know how to improve.

Teaching in Reception is satisfactory. Children settle quickly and receive good care. Effective features of teaching throughout the school include warm relationships promoted by teachers and their assistants, the way that interactive whiteboards are used to raise interest levels and the sharing of learning objectives with pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties are included and supported effectively by teaching assistants. However, too many pupils are given similar work, particularly in mathematics, and the level of challenge is often not matched to the pupils' abilities. In some lessons, pupils are not required to respond fully in whole-class discussions. This slows down the learning for a significant number, for example during literacy lessons. In addition, there are occasions when insufficient scope is given to pupils to formulate their own ideas when given writing tasks. The underachievers include mostly the quieter of the more capable pupils who are reluctant to come forward and some lower attainers who remained passive allowing others to respond to the teachers' questions. More pupils are engaged successfully in learning during group, rather than whole-class, activities. This is especially so in practical work, as seen for example, when pupils in Year 5 were investigating vibration in science.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum, including that for children in Reception, is satisfactory. Links between subjects help to make learning more relevant and meaningful for pupils. The curricular needs for pupils with learning difficulties are clearly defined in their targets and aid their progress. However, the curriculum for other pupils is not always adapted sufficiently from assessments of their work. It is the implementation of the curriculum that is also sometimes the weakness that limits their progress. An appropriate range of after school clubs, including, sports, dance, art and information and communication technology (ICT), makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. These are popular and well attended, but there are fewer opportunities for the 5- to 7-year-olds. Regular visits and visitors to school enrich the curriculum, for example the work children do at Dover Castle to link with their study on the Second World War.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, support and guidance are satisfactory. The school is friendly and provides a warm welcome for pupils and visitors. It provides good care, support and pastoral guidance for its pupils. Parents are very positive and feel that their children are safe and well cared for. Most pupils enjoy good relationships with adults. Child protection procedures are secure and effective and all statutory requirements are in place. The school's provision for promoting pupils' health and safety ensure that pupils adopt healthy lifestyles well. The academic guidance given to pupils is inconsistent and contrasts with the good support being given in other respects. Pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to progress. They are not given enough responsibility for their own learning and progress and cannot effectively judge how well they are doing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management are inadequate. Judgements about the school's performance and actions to promote improvement are not informed by rigorous and accurate evaluations of the impact of these actions on pupils' academic achievements. Consequently, leaders and managers have an inaccurate and overgenerous view of its effectiveness. This has delayed the urgent need to raise and secure higher standards and achievement. It continues to have a constraining influence on most of the initiatives that are being introduced and which have yet to have sufficient impact in raising pupils' achievements. Guided reading is one exception that is improving pupils' reading across the school.

The headteacher's commitment to the caring ethos of the school is respected. He receives good support from staff and parents in promoting pupils' personal development and well-being. However, he is not ensuring a strong enough emphasis on raising achievement and standards. Self-evaluation, strategies for planning and bringing about improvement and, consequently, the school's capacity to improve are inadequate. Governors are also committed to the caring Catholic ethos and meet their statutory responsibilities. However, they too lack sufficient knowledge of pupils' academic achievement to challenge decisions and ensure the necessary improvement.

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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?	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	3
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

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
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	3
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking to you and visiting your lessons. You were all very polite and helpful throughout the day. Unfortunately we found that your school is not as good as it should be and needs to improve. In particular, although adults care for you well, the school is not successful in helping you to achieve enough in your work.

Here are some of the good things we found:

- the way that caring adults look after you
- your behaviour, manners and considerate relationships
- your good understanding of healthy living
- your enjoyment of school.

This is what your school needs to do now:

- make sure that you make better progress in writing and mathematics
- use more effective ways for checking how good the school is and for bringing about improvements
- make sure that teachers give you learning at the right level
- make sure that you and your teachers check your work and progress so that you all know how well you are doing and what you have to do to improve.