

St Edmund's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124764
Local Authority	SUFFOLK
Inspection number	293107
Inspection date	30 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Geof Timms

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	281
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Simon Blakesley
Headteacher	Mrs Maria Kemble
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2002
School address	Westgate Street Bury St Edmunds IP33 1QG
Telephone number	01284 755141
Fax number	01284 762425

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average for its type. As it is a Catholic school it takes pupils from a wide area and range of socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is smaller than average. The school has a small number of pupils from a wide range of different heritages, a few of whom are at an early stage of learning English. There is a below average number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. A well below average proportion are entitled to free school meals. The school has achieved Basic Skills and Sports Mark Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is an effective and caring school which provides a good education for its pupils. The school's Catholic ethos has a high profile and this is a factor in the pupils' outstanding personal development. As one parent wrote 'We couldn't ask for a better start to school life for our children.' The school provides good value for money.

The standards achieved by pupils are above average by the time they leave the school. The progress made from when they start until the end of Year 4 is good. In Reception, they have good personal and social skills which the staff build on well so that children develop into effective learners. Their communication skills are less well developed and this is a focus of much of the early teaching of reading and writing. The provision in the Reception classes is good and by the time they start Year 1 most children are reaching levels above those expected. The good progress continues as is shown by recent national assessments made at the end of Year 2, which are consistently above average. Progress in Years 3 and 4 has been less consistent over time but the current cohort is making good progress and is on line to achieve above average standards by the end of the year.

One of the school's major strengths is its accurate and honest self-evaluation based on a growing expertise in analysing and using data. Standards are above average by the time pupils leave the school. The achievement of boys is lower than girls. One reason for this is that teachers do not always provide the more able pupils with sufficiently challenging work and the school has recognised the need to improve this. Because improvement since the last inspection has been good and the self-evaluation is accurate, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

The outstanding personal development is the result of excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision. Pupils have a deep understanding of spiritual matters, how to get along together and concepts of right and wrong. They know how to keep themselves healthy and safe, and clearly enjoy school greatly. They take a great pride in being given responsibility. One member of the school council said 'Teachers take our ideas seriously.' They develop good learning skills, as well as good basic literacy, numeracy and computer skills and are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education.

The good achievement evident is helped by the good quality teaching throughout the school. Good use of training opportunities, and chances to work with other schools, helps widen teachers' experience and develop their expertise. However, teachers do not consistently make clear to pupils what is expected of them in lessons and they do not have high enough expectations of the quality of presentation of pupils' written work. Teachers' good relationships with pupils results in attentive and well-behaved learners. The school has developed a good curriculum and shows a willingness to innovate, especially through some imaginative enrichment activities such as the cross-curricular week-long projects. There is an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. The school provides a good level of care and support for pupils and the academic guidance has improved since the last inspection.

The leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides a clear focus on achieving high standards and on continual improvement. She is well supported by a newly formed senior leadership team who recognise the need to develop their roles in the school, particularly through using performance management to improve further all aspects of the provision and thus raise

standards. The governing body have a good understanding of the school's strengths and the areas needing improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further by improving the provision for more able pupils.
- Improve pupils' learning by making clear to them what is expected in lessons and by raising teachers' expectations of the presentation of pupils' work.
- Develop the work of the senior leadership team so that it has a positive impact on standards and provision.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children start in Reception they often have well-developed personal and social skills and are well prepared for working and playing together. They also have a good understanding of numbers. However, their reading and writing skills and their knowledge and understanding of the world are often less well developed. The good progress they make through the effective and well-managed Reception classes ensures that by the time they start in Year 1 they have achieved levels above those expected. Good progress continues throughout Years 1 and 2 and the standards evident in the most recent national assessments are above average overall, even with a small dip in standards in mathematics. Standards in writing are improving. Girls did significantly better than boys. In Years 3 and 4, progress has been less consistent and in 2006 was only satisfactory. This is particularly true of the more able pupils. However, currently progress is good and pupils in Year 4 are achieving well due to the effective teaching now evident.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This is outstanding because the school is such a caring community which puts a very high focus on its Catholic nature and on giving pupils a high level of responsibility. Pupils react to this very positively. Their behaviour is excellent and their attendance is good. They are keen to learn and very enthusiastic about school life. Their cultural development has a particularly strong focus, as does their contribution to the community. Strengths include the gardening work with a nearby care home, which helps develop pupils' understanding of the wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good teaching has a positive impact on pupils' good achievement. Teachers plan lessons in depth and use appropriate resources, particularly making good use of information and communication technology through the whiteboards and the suite of laptop computers. Teachers ask effective questions which help them assess learning and extend pupils' knowledge. The school is introducing methods of helping pupils understand exactly what is expected of them and what they need to do to be successful. This provision is inconsistent at present and needs to become more embedded in all lessons. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and

they make many tasks enjoyable. However, they do not always insist on pupils taking sufficient care over the presentation of their written work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum which supports learning in all subjects. A major improvement since the last inspection has been the provision in design and technology. The school has begun early and effective work on adapting the literacy and numeracy planning to meet the latest national requirements. Planning work, which makes appropriate links between subjects, is effective during the week-long projects, such as International Week and creative arts weeks. However, there are missed opportunities to make links between subjects in the day-to-day planning. Very good use is made of the local and wider community in extending and enriching the curriculum. There is an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities offered to pupils, including a range of sports, musical, artistic and other clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect is good because the school has a caring ethos and works effectively to keep pupils safe. The requirements for employment checks, child protection and other health and safety procedures, are all carried out appropriately. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that they are happy to turn to staff if worried or concerned. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are fully included and they make good progress because of this. Assessment of pupils' work has improved since the last inspection and teachers now use this more effectively to support and guide pupils in their learning and identify pupils who may be underachieving. However, the guidance in individual lessons does not always make clear exactly what is expected.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has had a number of recent changes of temporary and permanent senior staff. Even so, the headteacher is providing a very clear lead in raising standards and improving provision still further. She is well supported by senior staff and the governing body. The senior leadership team are at an early stage in developing their work, as are some of the subject leaders. The school makes effective use of data analysis and this supports the self evaluation which is leading to good development planning and recognition of the most important priorities for the further improvement of the school.

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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>	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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

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	2
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	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

1 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Edmund's Catholic Primary School, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1QG

Thank you very much for the way you made me welcome when I visited your school this week. In particular, I want to thank the members of the school council who I met and talked to and to those who looked after me at lunchtime.

You told me that you enjoyed being at the school and a lot of you think that it is a good school. I think you are right; it is a good school. You learn a lot of new things and this helps you get above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school is outstanding at helping you develop as people, as you learn about other faiths, countries and cultures. Although the school council felt there was some bad behaviour, I agree with the school that you behave excellently most of the time and this helps your learning.

The school offers you lots of chances to join a fantastic range of clubs and also to take part in special weeks and trips out of school. The teachers work very hard to help you learn new things and to make lessons interesting. I know you all enjoy using the new laptops and you are very confident with the computers.

I have asked your teachers to do three things to try and make the school even better than it is.

- Make sure the work they provide is hard enough for all of you.
- Make sure you know exactly what you are expected to learn and help you make your work much neater and tidier.
- Make sure the teachers help each other teach, share good ideas and get even better at their job.

Thank you again for your help during the inspection. Keep working hard and smiling, and enjoy your time at St Edmund's!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms Lead inspector