



St Felix Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 124769
Local Authority SUFFOLK
Inspection number 293109
Inspection dates 21–22 November 2006
Reporting inspector David Herbert

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	School Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Haverhill
Age range of pupils	3–9		Suffolk CB9 9DE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01440 703775
Number on roll (school)	217	Fax number	01440 710768
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr Duncan Batty
		Headteacher	Mrs J Wendy Lashmar
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–9	21–22 November 2006	293109

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized primary school serves the Parish of St Felix and also draws pupils from other parts of Haverhill and from surrounding villages. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, as is the percentage that has learning difficulties or disabilities. The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. All but a very small number speak English as their first or main language. There has been a significant turnover in leadership within the last two years, including the appointment of a new headteacher this term. The school does not currently have a permanent deputy headteacher. Children start in the Nursery with below average levels of knowledge and skills.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors and the new headteacher of St Felix Roman Catholic School agree that the school is satisfactory with some good features. The new headteacher has made a good start, having established good working relationships with staff and gained the respect of parents. Standards of pastoral care are high. With the change of leadership the standards and aspirations of the school are being reviewed so that the new staff team has a shared understanding of how the school can develop in the future.

Teaching and learning in the school are satisfactory and based on a sound curriculum. By the time pupils leave in Year 4, standards are broadly average and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. In the Nursery and Reception classes, good provision and teaching help pupils to achieve well. They reach the expected standards from starting points which are below national expectations. At the end of Year 2 standards were above and sometimes well above average in past years but they have fallen more recently. In 2006 they were a little above average. In Year 4 in 2006, pupils did not maintain sufficient progress to fully achieve their challenging target levels. A key reason for the fall in standards was that systems for tracking pupils' progress were not effective enough to identify and remedy any slow-down in progress promptly. New and potentially robust procedures have recently been introduced, but these have not yet had sufficient time to show their full effect. Leadership teams are now working to ensure that assessments form an effective basis of everyday planning and that potential underachievement is identified and addressed promptly.

There is a happy and positive atmosphere because pupils enjoy their work and want to come to school. Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that pupils of all ages share good relationships and take care of one another well. Their personal development is satisfactory overall because their attendance and application to their work could be improved further. They have limited opportunity to take initiative in their work so that they have responsibility for their own learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used fully to engage and stimulate pupils' interest.

Parents hold extremely positive views of the school and appreciate what the staff achieve for their children. One parent expressed this in saying, 'We have always found the school responsive to our needs and our concerns. It is keen to listen and to promote co-operation between the school, children and their families'.

There has not been enough improvement in some important areas since the last inspection, mainly because of disruptions to the school's leadership. However, the new headteacher has made a good start and is working closely with staff and governors to ensure all have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and clear direction for improvement. There are signs that weaknesses are being tackled effectively and consequently, the school is showing a sound capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate of progress that pupils make, especially in Years 3 and 4.

- Extend opportunities for pupils to use ICT across the curriculum.
- Ensure that systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are robust, routine to the school's work and effective in promoting high achievement.
- Ensure staff and governors have a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are centrally involved in driving forward the school's priorities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In Nursery and Reception children make good progress, which is most evident in their personal, social and emotional development. The provision here is well-planned and effective. Standards in Year 2 were just above average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2006, after a period when they were higher still, particularly in writing and mathematics. Although pupils' progress and achievement was satisfactory in 2006, it was not as good as in previous years. In Years 3 and 4 in 2006, some pupils did not make sufficient progress in English and mathematics to reach their target levels, although their achievement was broadly satisfactory. This is confirmed both by teacher assessments and by the tests that pupils have taken. Pupils' standards by Year 2 and Year 4 are currently broadly average and their achievements satisfactory. The school is addressing weaknesses, particularly in the way pupils' progress was monitored, which is reversing the decline in achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties make at least satisfactory progress because they are assessed and supported well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory with some important good features. Their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In particular they are thoughtful and respectful during worship and have a good understanding of the lives of people from other backgrounds and faiths. Pupils enjoy school, although attendance rates have fallen to below the national average in recent years, mostly because of families taking holidays in term time. Pupils behave very well on occasions such as whole-school assemblies, with the oldest ones setting a good example. A Year 4 pupil commented, 'Our behaviour has to be better than anyone else's to show the younger ones.' Behaviour in lessons varies depending on how interesting and engaging the tasks are. Pupils sometimes tire of listening to their teacher or do not feel stretched and become restless or chatty, losing concentration on their work as a result. Pupils have a good understanding of how to maintain their personal safety and develop a healthy lifestyle. However, they have the maturity to contribute more to the school and the wider community. There are plans to introduce opportunities such as a school council to channel their enthusiasm and give them a forum to express their views. Pupils' social and academic achievements give them a sound foundation for the next stage of their schooling and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features. In Nursery and Reception the staff provide well for the full range of children's needs, which enables them to settle successfully. The organisation of activities is firm but supportive and high expectations are communicated well. In many lessons across the school the work is currently well matched to the different levels of pupils' abilities. This ensures that their application is maintained because they are stimulated by what they are learning. Teaching assistants work closely with the teachers across the school and support pupils with learning difficulties well.

In some weaker lessons pupils are challenged less well by the learning objectives and teachers' marking does not tell them how to improve their work further. As a result pupils apply themselves less consistently and make slower progress. Pupils do not have enough opportunity to evaluate their own learning and do not refer to their targets sufficiently for them to be fully effective.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is good in the Foundation Stage where activities achieve a good balance between the adult led sessions and those the children initiate themselves. Good use is made of the improved outdoor area for this age group. In the rest of the school, subjects are planned satisfactorily and with an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy.

Teachers have started to make learning more interesting by exploiting links between subjects, for example during a recent 'creative morning' of arts events. Such links are not fully integrated or planned across the entire curriculum. Activities in ICT are too limited and pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise and apply their ICT skills in ways that promote their learning in other subjects. Music provision makes good use of the expertise of a specialist teacher. French is taught to Years 3 and 4 and pupils recently celebrated a European Languages Day. An adequate range of clubs and visits enriches the curriculum and is very popular with pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. In particular, the day-to-day pastoral care offered by the staff is of a high quality. The very good relationships established with pupils' families and the parish mean that home, school and church work closely together to promote pupils' well-being. There are good procedures for protecting and safeguarding pupils while they are in school. The good provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage and for those with learning difficulties or disabilities ensures that these groups settle

well in school. Pupils feel safe and well cared for, confident that they have adults to turn to with any problems. Teachers give pupils satisfactory feedback about their work and set termly targets with them for improvement. Since these are often not reviewed very regularly, pupils and teachers are not making full use of them to support further improvement. The school's new arrangements for tracking individual progress aim to give pupils guidance that is tailored more closely to their achievements and particular needs. This initiative is timely in the school's drive to raise standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Self-evaluation systems are satisfactory and are now improving. The new headteacher has made a good start and is developing an accurate picture of the school's achievements. There is currently no permanent deputy headteacher after a number of changes of personnel in this post over the last four years. This has led to a lack of continuity in the management of some aspects of the school's work which have affected standards. There is a positive atmosphere in the school, based on good staff relationships and good pastoral care for pupils.

Subject leaders are beginning to use new systems to monitor and track pupils' achievements, but have not yet had the opportunity to evaluate and improve practice sufficiently to raise standards. The new leadership team is reviewing the priorities for improvement, which have sometimes lacked sharply defined criteria in the past by which to judge whether targets have been achieved. The governors are led by a new chairperson who maintains weekly contact with the headteacher. The governing body receives regular reports but is not centrally involved in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school and planning for its improvement. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

23 November 2006

Dear Children

St Felix Roman Catholic Primary School, School Lane, Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 9DE

This letter is to thank you all for your welcome when Mrs Ranger and I visited you recently. Special thanks go to the children in Year 4 who gave up some of their time to tell us about your school.

These are the best things we found:

- You enjoy being in school and get on well together. We were very impressed by your behaviour in assembly
- You are learning well about how to lead safe and healthy lives
- You like your teachers and you are right in feeling that all the adults in the school care about you
- The staff in your school work closely with your parents to make sure you are looked after well
- Mrs Lashmar is enjoying her first term with you and wants to make sure you do as well as you can

I have asked your school to make sure that a few things in particular get better:

- Your teachers have introduced some good ways of checking how you get on in your work and we want them to use this information to plan things that help you learn even faster
- You have computers in the school and interactive whiteboards in some classrooms and we want you to use these in your different subjects so that you enjoy lessons even more
- All the teachers and governors need to find out as much as they can about how well you are doing so that they know what should be improved next

Best wishes to you all

Mr David Herbert

(Lead Inspector)