

St Richard's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126038
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	293444
Inspection date	9 May 2007
Reporting inspector	David Collard

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Elliott
Headteacher	Catherine Hunn
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2001
School address	Cawley Road Chichester PO19 1XB
Telephone number	01243 784549
Fax number	01243 530646

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Richard's is an average-sized primary school serving a wide area around the city of Chichester. It has a strong Catholic ethos that permeates all work within the school. The number of pupils from ethnic minority groups has increased over the last few years and is now above the national average. While a small number of pupils arrive at the school with little spoken English, they are soon able to communicate effectively with their peers. Children start in the Reception class with the levels broadly expected for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is a highly effective school that provides an outstanding quality of education for its pupils. This is because children enter the school with standards broadly at those expected for their ages and leave as confident, articulate young people in Year 6. They have gained well-above-average standards in English, mathematics and science. School assessments and pupils' work confirm that this is also the case in a number of other subjects such as art and information and communication technology. A major contributory factor to this excellent achievement is how all groups of pupils improve consistently through each year. This is because of the excellent teaching and the outstanding curriculum. As a group of older pupils unanimously agreed about their future well-being, 'We are extremely well prepared to achieve whatever we want in later life.'

Provision for the Foundation Stage is excellent. From the start of school in the Reception class, pupils are expected to become independent. They are encouraged to think for themselves and take responsibility for their own learning. Very effective assessments and interesting activities provide a successful balance between both teacher- and child-initiated activities. As a result, many children are working above the standards expected of them by the start of Year 1. This flying start is enhanced through the infant years. In the Year 2 national tests, pupils have generally achieved above-average standards for the last five years. Through Years 3 to 6 these strong foundations are capitalised on even more and by Year 6 the pupils reach well-above-average standards, with achievement in mathematics and science being particularly high in national tests.

In addition to this strong academic success, the school has successfully built a curriculum that aims at producing well-rounded individuals. The outstanding care, support and guidance contribute very effectively to pupils' outstanding personal development.

The very strong leadership of the headteacher is complemented by a dedicated senior leadership team and a knowledgeable and confident governing body. Relative weaknesses from the last inspection have been effectively remedied and new challenges have been tackled with rigour. This is due to very thorough assessments and to highly innovative links being made between different subjects. The intention quite rightly is to ensure that the newer, less experienced subject managers are able to play a fuller part in these improvements. This will also help guide the overcautious self-evaluation made by the school.

The school reacts well to changing circumstances. For instance, the increasing numbers of pupils from other countries has meant that teachers have had to provide support for different languages. It has done this well and it is evident that these groups of pupils make similar levels of progress to all others. The school has rightly identified that it needs some more expert guidance on how to ensure that any potential learning difficulties can be addressed at an early stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Widen the knowledge about school self-evaluation by ensuring all subject leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within their areas of responsibility.
- Seek expert guidance to extend teachers' understanding about how they can support pupils with English as an additional language even better.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils reach well-above-average standards by Year 6 and achievement is excellent. Progress in the Foundation Stage is good in all six areas of learning so that, before the end of the Reception year, many children are working at levels that are usually expected in Year 1. Equally, pupils are very well prepared for more formal work because in making choices about tasks they become more independent.

Effective teaching ensures that pupils of all abilities systematically build on what they have learnt and all pupils are able to tackle challenging targets. Pupils with learning difficulties make particularly good progress. Targets suggest that pupils in Years 2 and 6 are in line to do at least as well in national tests as has been the case in previous years. For instance, there are examples of high quality written stories, interspersed with descriptive and often evocative language, and in mathematics pupils are increasingly able to solve quite complex calculations. On display and in portfolios there are many excellent examples of independent work in other subjects. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those at an early stage of learning English make similar levels of progress as all other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent and pupils' attendance is above the national average. The Catholic ethos within the school is very strong and highly influences pupils' personal development and very good attitudes towards work. Discussions with pupils are thoroughly engaging and they clearly demonstrate a true excitement and enjoyment about their learning. They are taught about taking responsibility from an early age and do so with relish. Teachers encourage pupils to think hard. For instance, in one philosophy session, Year 6 pupils gave some highly thoughtful answers about the positive and negative aspects of being able to change things in the world. As with all pupils at the school, they listened to each other and considered how they might give a balanced view. Pupils feel safe and say that there are very few instances of unruly behaviour. As a result, the playground has a very harmonious atmosphere. However, pupils rightly say they would like more resources to use during breaktimes. Pupils are taught and take notice of how to live a healthy lifestyle. Pupils with English as an additional language say they feel well integrated into school life and are encouraged to talk about their different cultural experiences. This said, pupils' contribution to both the local and world-wide community is extensive and includes both financial and friendship support to another school in Kenya.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is excellent and stems from tremendous consistency in all classes that ensures pupils' work builds upon what has gone before. This applies not only to individual tasks but also over the longer term. For instance, in one class the teacher conducted a discussion about what could be improved from the previous day. The class were then able to decide on the learning priorities. Afterwards pupils talked about their own weaknesses, how they had improved and what they were setting as their next target.

Inspection evidence, confirmed in the recent monitoring by the school, diocese and local authority, indicates that there are examples of exemplary practice. The very effective teaching is ensuring that all pupils are highly challenged and has extended the expertise of less experienced teachers. Particularly effective support by specialist teachers and teaching assistants is given to pupils with learning difficulties, a number of whom go on to reach average standards but from much lower starting points.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The highly innovative curriculum has clearly planned links between subjects so that children do not learn about subjects in isolation. This ensures that pupils experience a very broad and wide range of different activities. Replanning of each subject has been undertaken to provide real connections that are relevant to the pupils' own experiences. While this is still being reviewed, it is already providing pupils with the necessary skills they will need in later life. For instance, older pupils have been introduced to philosophy lessons, French is offered through Key Stage 2 and teachers work extremely hard to ensure that specific subject skills are built upon through each year. To this is added an extremely wide range of extra-curricular activities addressing sporting, creative and aesthetic needs as well as visits and professional coaches. Pupils say they find it hard to fit everything in!

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care and welfare of pupils is of paramount importance to the school. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, a fact acknowledged both in the inspection questionnaires and surveys undertaken by the school. Safeguarding procedures are effective without being obtrusive and pupils are expected to play their part. Examples include the recent school council initiative for a poster competition to stop the inconsiderate parking outside the school. Pupils joining the school during the year are always assigned two 'buddies' to help them settle in and pupils take this responsibility very seriously and do it well. Parents help settle their younger children and staff assist if any difficulties occur. Academic guidance is at the heart of support, not only for those with learning difficulties but also for those with higher ability or who have English as an additional language. Effective use is made of assessment information to ensure children are given work suitable for their capability. This is the reason why progress is so consistent across groups and individuals. Nevertheless, the school is now looking at ways to draw on specialist expertise to help assess pupils from other countries and so determine whether any extra support is needed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides the driving force for change and is ably supported by two assistant headteachers. A particular strength is the way in which the headteacher shares her own vision and acts as an enabler so that staff can undertake their jobs effectively. Middle managers also take an active role by scrutinising their own subjects and have a very clear view about their own subject development. While this is very thorough and produces realistic evaluation, the school, in striving for perfection, is further developing the use of classroom monitoring.

The extremely effective governing body has high levels of expertise and a good understanding of the school. Governors keep a thorough watch over the school's performance. They take part in discussions about proposed change, questioning ideas and plans such as during a recent review of provision in the Foundation Stage. These many strengths provide good evidence about the undoubted capacity for the school to continue to improve.

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Annex A

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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

11 May 2007

Dear Pupils

St Richard's Catholic Primary School, Cawley Road, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1XB

Thank you for your very kind welcome when I joined you at your school. I thoroughly enjoyed my day and was very impressed with all that you are doing. I am sure it is no surprise to you that I think your school is outstanding. I have included some of the main reasons for this below:

- You told me how well you thought you were doing and I agree that this is happening in many subjects. You progress through the school extremely well so that by Year 6 many of you are working well above the levels expected for your age. So you all have a lot to live up to!
- You also told me how well you behave and again I agree with you. I think that your behaviour is exceptional.
- I also think you are becoming very independent and can see what you need to do to improve. This is because you receive excellent teaching.
- You have a very exciting curriculum with so many interesting things to do. As some of you said, I wonder how you fit it all into a day.
- I know you are very clear about who to go to if there are any problems. This is because you are looked after very well.
- Your headteacher, along with all the other staff, know exactly how things can get even better. I know that you have your own ideas about playground games. I have asked some members of the school council to work on this.

Although there were no major things that needed to be improved, your teachers are aware that they would like to get some more help for those of you who come from other countries. I have also asked them to try and give all the subject leaders a chance to have a look at the teaching in each class to see how good it is.

Finally, I would like to wish you all the best for the future. You can continue to help improve St Richard's by working very hard and suggesting ways that you think will help improve things.

Yours sincerely,

David Collard (Lead Inspector)