



# St Catherine's Catholic Primary School, Swindon

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 126432  
**Local Authority** Swindon  
**Inspection number** 293558  
**Inspection dates** 11–12 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Peter Callow

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>	Davenwood
<b>School category</b>	Community		Swindon
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		SN2 7LL
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01793 822699
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	191	<b>Fax number</b>	01793 332021
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Neil Askins
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Brenda Martin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 November 2001		

<b>Age group</b> 4–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 11–12 October 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 293558
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Pupils come from a good social mix of families and most belong to the Catholic faith. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties is above average and increasing. A higher than average number of pupils join or leave the school other than at the usual time. There have been significant changes in staff over recent years and just under half the teachers joined this term.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of St Catherine's is satisfactory and improving. The school has a special atmosphere in which each person feels included, valued and cared for. As a result the school is highly regarded by pupils and their parents. As one parent said, 'Everyone is made to feel part of the community'. Assemblies, which are shared with parents and the wider community, are occasions when the high degree of respect that pupils have for each other and for staff and visitors is clearly demonstrated. They also show the confidence with which pupils can take a lead and the major contribution they make to pupils' good spiritual development. The headteacher has led the school well to create this special atmosphere and ensure that pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They talk knowledgeably about the importance of keeping safe and having a healthy lifestyle. Staying healthy is strongly promoted, as part of a balanced curriculum, especially by the wide range of opportunities for physical activity. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved considerably since the last inspection. Children enter school with standards that are similar to those expected for their age, but those of boys are usually lower than girls. The boys generally do not catch up as they move through the school, although they are starting to in science. Not enough has been done so far to check the effectiveness of strategies to raise boys' standards. There is satisfactory provision for young learners in the Reception class and their standards are broadly average at the end of the year. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are average. As a result, the achievement of pupils is satisfactory overall. There have been particular weaknesses in standards in writing and mathematics in recent years. This is because a few pupils in each class and especially the slower and faster learners do not always make sufficient progress. Standards in writing are now showing improvement because teachers are making better use of assessment information to plan activities that present appropriate challenge for all pupils. More precise targets for pupils about how they can improve their work have also helped. This overall change and success has not yet been achieved in mathematics. Whilst all leaders, including governors, are developing their skills and strategies for monitoring and evaluation, they are not yet rigorous enough to improve satisfactory teaching overall to consistently good teaching. However, because the headteacher is now able to delegate some of the considerable responsibilities she has carried to her capable deputy headteacher and to subject coordinators, improvements are happening much more quickly. As a consequence the school's capacity to improve even further is now good.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in mathematics across the school.
- Help teachers to make better use of assessment information and target setting so that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
- Make monitoring and evaluation more effective to remove the inconsistencies in teaching so that all pupils achieve as well as they can and that boys reach higher standards.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and standards by the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6 are average. Pupils generally have the knowledge and skills expected for their age when they start school. Boys' standards are usually lower than girls' and they do not catch up as they move up through the school, although they are starting to in science. Most pupils make satisfactory progress but those in Reception make good progress in reading because the teaching of sounds and letters is good. The school works successfully to overcome the barriers to pupils' progress presented by a higher than average number who join the school other than at the normal time and an increasing number with learning difficulties. A few pupils in each class, particularly the slower and faster learners, do not progress as well as they might. This is currently most evident in mathematics. These pupils do not always meet the challenging targets that are set because some activities do not build sufficiently on their existing knowledge, skills and understanding.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and well-being, is good. Their behaviour is excellent. Pupils blossom at St. Catherine's because they feel safe and valued. They have the self-confidence to put forward their views because they know they are listened to carefully. For example, they chose equipment for the 'trim trail' as part of the successful healthy school's bid. Pupils' response to class competitions for attendance has been so positive that this is now good. Pupils enjoy school and try hard. 'I get excited when I do all my work,' said a Reception class boy. Their awareness of others' needs is shown by their initiatives to raise funds for children in India. Visitors, such as the nurse and community policeman, help pupils learn to keep themselves healthy and safe. Pupils are also learning to take responsibility and be good citizens through jobs such as playground monitors. Work to achieve a Basic Skills Award has made the school aware of the need for further improvement to pupils' numeracy skills so that they are even better prepared for the next stage in their education and future life.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and it is consistently good in the Year 5 and Year 6 classes. Adults engage pupils well through good use of praise and careful questioning. Lessons are usually well planned but sometimes teaching assistants are not used effectively enough to give pupils the support they need. Interactive whiteboards are often well used to enhance both teaching and learning. Teachers

provide a clear focus at the start of the lesson and pupils have a good understanding of what they are learning to do. However, feedback to pupils, including marking, does not always give enough information to them about how successful they have been in meeting the success criteria of the lesson and what they need to do to improve. Some good examples show assessment being used well to match work to pupils' differing needs. However, inconsistent practice means that activities do not build sufficiently on all pupils' prior attainment. Consequently, some pupils, particularly slower and faster learners, do not make the progress of which they are capable. This is most evident in mathematics lessons.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy a wide range of activities that engage their interests and support their personal development. Opportunities to use basic skills, particularly numeracy, in other subjects are sometimes missed. In addition, the curriculum is not sufficiently adjusted to cater for the needs of pupils of differing abilities and this affects their progress. The provision for ICT is much improved. Pupils are confidently using recently purchased laptop computers and the understanding and application of control technology in Year 6 is impressive. There is a well planned programme of personal, social and health education and a good number of visitors to the school provide practical advice about keeping safe and healthy. There has been a significant increase in the range of after school activities which cater for all interests. Visits out of school support and enrich many areas of the curriculum.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. There is a high standard of pastoral support which contributes significantly to pupils' enjoyment of school and their good personal development. The day-to-day care of pupils is good and child protection procedures are thorough. However, some of the record systems relating to health and safety are not organised well enough. Good induction procedures on entry to school and arrangements for transfer to secondary education help ensure a smooth transition. Targets are in place to help pupils improve the standards of their work. However, these are not yet used well enough because pupils are not clear about them or understand how they will help improve their work. In particular, targets for pupils with learning difficulties are not always precise enough or used sufficiently in the planning of lessons to help meet their needs.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall with some good features. The headteacher's concern for pupils' and adults' personal development and well-being has resulted in a special ethos in which everyone feels included and valued. Parents

overwhelmingly recognise this and work well in partnership with the school. A large number of staff changes in recent years at all levels mean that the headteacher has carried an onerous and extensive range of responsibilities. Whilst areas for improvement have been accurately identified the staff changes have limited the speed and effectiveness with which improvements have been made. However, the headteacher has the good support of the recently appointed deputy headteacher and together they are providing a clearer focus, based on the better use of assessment data. This is bringing about more rapid improvement. The role of subject coordinators has improved since the last inspection and is being developed further to strengthen the leadership. Leaders at all levels are developing their skills and strategies for monitoring and evaluation but these are not yet rigorous enough to bring about consistently good teaching or to ensure that boys do as well as girls. The governing body is well led, fulfils all its statutory requirements and has good systems in place for monitoring the work of the school.

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## 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>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<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	1
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	3

### The quality of provision

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

<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>	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	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
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**

Thank you for being so friendly when we visited your school recently. You were very polite and showed us the same high level of respect that you have for each other and those who teach and help you. Your behaviour is excellent. We enjoyed your assemblies and they showed us that they are an important part of your day and they help to create the special atmosphere that so many of you and your parents told us about. You also told us how much you enjoy going to school because you feel safe and well cared for. Your headteacher has led the school well to make this happen. In the last few years your headteacher has had to take on extra work and responsibilities because there have been a lot of changes of staff. She has now got other people, including the deputy headteacher, to help and support her in making your school, which is presently satisfactory, become a good school and we are sure this can happen. Overall you reach satisfactory standards in your work, but these could be better. Your school has worked hard and improved the standards of your writing already. We have asked for standards in mathematics to get better too. We have also asked your teachers to plan all your tasks so that they build on what you already know and can do and give you some challenge. In addition, by giving you clearer targets and explaining them more carefully, you will be able to do more to improve your own learning. The headteacher and other leaders of the school, including the governors, already check to see how well you are all doing in your work. We have asked them to look even more carefully to make sure all of the teaching is good and that boys do as well as girls. We are confident, because your attitudes to work and to school are so good, that you will play your part in helping St Catherine's to become even better.