

St Ann's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 107152 |
| Local Authority | Sheffield |
| Inspection number | 309329 |
| Inspection dates | 10–11 December 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Joe Peacock |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 111 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Michael O'Brien |
| Headteacher | Mrs Theresa Siverns |
| Date of previous school inspection | 29 September 2003 |
| School address | McIntyre Road Stocksbridge Sheffield South Yorkshire S36 1DG |
| Telephone number | 0114 2884281 |
| Fax number | 0114 2888972 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is situated in a small industrial town to the north of Sheffield and takes pupils from a wide rural area. It is smaller than average with almost all of its pupils being of White British heritage. On the site there is a pre-school day care unit, but this was not inspected. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are both broadly average. The school has gained a number of awards, such as Investors in People, and it has Extended School status, the first in the area to achieve this.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which is giving good value for money. Expertise, energy and enthusiasm are key strengths displayed in abundance by the headteacher, working in close partnership with the assistant headteacher. As a result, standards are rising and the quality of education is improving. Tough decisions have had to be made along the way but all staff have been supportive and they work well as a team for the benefit of pupils. Inspection evidence mostly agrees with the school's self-evaluation. However, some areas are better than the school gives itself credit for.

Pupils make good progress, from their below average starting points in Reception to Year 2, because of the consistently good quality of teaching. Recent initiatives to raise standards in reading have been effective with pupils doing particularly well by Year 2. Overall, standards are average by Year 6 with pupils continuing to make good progress through the junior classes. Raising standards in English has been a key focus and the teaching and learning strategies introduced have been successful with the school's performance in the 2007 national tests being significantly above average. Standards in mathematics and science are not as good, mainly because far fewer pupils achieve above average standards than in English. In some mathematics lessons, the activities planned do not provide sufficient challenge for the more able pupils. As a result, their progress suffers.

The quality of teaching is good throughout the school with teachers and teaching assistants working effectively as a team. Good relationships exist between pupils and their teachers and pupils have a good attitude to their work. Behaviour is exemplary throughout the school. The curriculum is good and generally meets the needs and interests of pupils well. This means that pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance is above average. Good quality planning for mathematics and science is currently being implemented but it is too early to judge the full impact of this work at present.

Parents' views about the school are positive. They appreciate the good level of care, support and guidance and the fact that their children enjoy coming to school. Staff know their pupils well and set challenging individual targets for them in English and mathematics. The caring support and clear guidance for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a major factor enabling these pupils to make good and often very good progress.

Leadership and management are good. All staff carefully monitor pupils' progress and the quality and effectiveness of their teaching by observing one another's lessons. Governors are very supportive. The new chair of governors has a very good knowledge of the school and is keen to ensure that all governors have access to relevant training to make them more effective in monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter Reception with skills that are generally below the level expected. Their communication skills are well below average. The management of the Foundation Stage is particularly effective and there is a very favourable adult to child ratio as the intake this year is smaller than usual. This ensures that the quality of teaching and learning is effective and that children receive the attention they need to develop early skills. As a result, children settle

in quickly, are happy and they invariably make good progress in all areas. By the end of Reception, most achieve the targets expected of them except in their communication skills which remain below the level typically expected.

A strength of the teaching is the individual attention and high quality of support provided for children when they are working in small groups with the teacher or teaching assistant. During these sessions children often make very good progress. Independent activities, however, are not always set out imaginatively to encourage instant play or challenge the more able.

The school has plans to further develop the new outdoor area and it is being used well to support learning in all areas of the curriculum. Children, for example, ignored the cold to use large equipment to build shapes, or share physical education equipment. Transition from the day care unit and into Year 1 is well managed making children's learning a seamless progression.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics and science, especially for higher attaining pupils.
- In Reception, provide more imaginative activities that will grab children's interest, challenge higher attainers and enhance children's creative development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The relatively small numbers and changing nature of each year group, with new pupils arriving or some leaving, affects national test results. In Years 1 and 2 pupils make good progress and, by Year 2, standards are average in writing, mathematics and science, but above average in reading. This is largely due to the Rainbow Reading initiative where staff are supported well by parent volunteers. Overall standards in Year 6 are broadly average. This takes account of the fact that one third of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There has been a significant improvement in English, especially in pupils' writing and standards are above average. This represents very good progress in this subject and this is linked directly to effective strategies introduced by the school. Pupils' progress is good in mathematics and science but not enough of the most able pupils are attaining above average standards. Tracking data shows that pupils who remain at the school from Year 2 to Year 6 often make very good progress. Challenging targets have been set in 2008, reflecting the improving trend in standards. Pupils who find learning difficult make particularly good progress as they are identified early and provided with timely, effective support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their consistently above average attendance. They respond enthusiastically to all the learning opportunities provided for them in lessons and in after school activities and their behaviour is excellent. Many, however, lack the self-assurance to express themselves clearly and confidently. Their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures a good attitude to learning and that relationships with one another and with staff are strong. Pupils have a good understanding about how life and faith can differ in Britain today.

School councillors are proud of the fact that they can see the improvements to dining arrangements following their suggestions, and pupils on the council last year are pleased that their recycling activities, which have a positive impact on the environment, gained a Bronze

Award. Fund-raising events and pupils' frequent involvement in community activities are helping to build confidence and self-esteem. Pupils' ability to work well together and their good progress in literacy, numeracy, computer skills and art and design, prepare them well for the future. They know the importance of a healthy diet and exercise and the Activemark Award recognises their achievements.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The strengths in teaching and learning far outweigh any weaknesses and, as a result, pupils make good progress. In one outstanding lesson, with the oldest pupils, their progress was excellent because of the teacher's enthusiasm and her 100% guarantee that they would all succeed! As a result pupils rose to the challenge of dividing decimals. Teaching assistants make a major contribution to pupils' learning, both in the classroom and when supporting pupils learning in small groups out of the class. Year 3 pupils enjoyed the challenge of a mathematics programme in the computer suite, for example. Good relationships between pupils and their teachers, detailed planning for the different ability levels and the effective use of modern technology, such as the new interactive whiteboards, to enhance learning are other key strengths. In a minority of cases, teachers do not always provide higher attaining pupils with sufficiently challenging work, particularly in mathematics and science, and this limits their progress. The over-use of individual whiteboards means that the amount of recorded work in pupils' books each week is less than that usually found.

Assessment of pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology is good. The information is used well to ensure that work is planned which successfully builds upon previous knowledge.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Providing an effective and worthwhile curriculum is seen by the school as the best way to raise standards. The significant improvements made to the English curriculum, giving pupils plenty of opportunities to use their reading and writing skills across all subjects, have resulted in them achieving much higher standards. Pupils now enjoy writing, recording 'delectable discussions' or 'incredible instructions!' Similarly, a computer club for girls (CC4G) also raised their skills level and ensures that computers are used better to support learning in all subjects. The school is now turning its attention to improving the mathematics and science curriculum provision. The strategies to improve calculation, an identified weakness, have yet to have an impact. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly well provided for through the curriculum which is matched closely to their capabilities. Some learning activities, however, do not always provide enough challenge for the more able.

Staff carefully plan a themed curriculum, grouping subject areas around a lead subject. In history, for example, good links with English, music, art and design and science are made when pupils studied the Tudors, looking at costume design, writing a biography of Francis Drake and recording their visit to Bishop House.

The curriculum is successfully enhanced with an interesting range of out of school activities, with visits and visitors adding to pupils' enjoyment of learning. There is strong support for

pupils' personal development with the introduction of the social and emotional aspects of learning programme. French and Spanish also add much to their cultural awareness as well as developing their modern language skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

'The school is like a jewel. Parents are delighted when they find it.' and 'Children come first, every time.' were typical comments from parents who appreciate the caring and supportive atmosphere, especially for the more vulnerable pupils. Parents' views are fully justified. Procedures for ensuring pupils' safety are diligently carried out and there are appropriate policies in place for child protection and health and safety. The school provides good personal and academic guidance for pupils, preparing them well for the next stage of their education. The close links with pre-school groups when children first enter the Reception class ensure that their needs are met well and that they settle quickly. The school analyses assessment data carefully in order to ensure good progression in pupils' learning. Teachers' marking gives good guidance for pupils on how to further improve using a double tick system to draw attention to especially good work. All pupils have their own individual targets but some of these are not challenging enough for the more able pupils in mathematics and science.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and assistant headteacher are a powerful duo. Both have high expectations and the necessary skills to ensure that areas identified for improvement are improved. Both have the best interests of the school and its pupils uppermost in their hearts and minds.

Effective steps have been taken to distribute leadership and management responsibilities across the staff. Other senior leaders have clear roles and a good understanding of the actions required to raise standards. The impact of this is seen in the much improved performance in English. Attention is now being focused on raising standards in mathematics and science. The information from the successful tracking system, introduced by the headteacher, is being used to set more challenging targets for all pupils.

Self-evaluation is reflective and involves all staff. It is mainly accurate. Staff carefully monitor standards and each has evaluated the quality of teaching and learning across the school, trying to find ways of improving it. The management of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, with support staff being trained and deployed effectively. The school improvement plan accurately identifies priorities. Governance remains good despite a large turnover of governors recently. The knowledgeable and extremely conscientious new chair of governors knows the school well, having been a former pupil. Like him, all governors are keen to help the school move forward. Their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and they regularly visit during school hours. However, they are currently over-reliant on the headteacher and staff for evaluating school effectiveness.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| 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

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| 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 | 2 |

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

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| 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 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

Inspection of St Ann's Catholic Primary School, Sheffield. S36 1DG

In the bleak mid winter,

Not so long ago,

I met Santa's little helper,

Preparing for a show.

Meeting him all covered in bells and listening to your singing, I couldn't resist writing a little poem! I really enjoyed watching your rehearsals for a while. It was so good to see your teachers shepherding you with such care and kindness during the concert rehearsals. I can understand why you get on so well with all of them. Even when everyone was so excited, you all listened to your teachers and behaved superbly well, just like the little angels from the realms of Stocksbridge that you are! In fact, it is a long time since I have seen such well-behaved children. You are a credit to your parents. By the way, I thought that the square Christmas cake costume was absolutely brilliant. All this helped to make my inspection of your school so memorable. Your school is such a good one!

All your hard work in your lessons is beginning to pay off. Well done to those of you in the infant classes. You have made giant strides in your reading and in Year 6 last year, it was good to see such a big improvement in English! I am hoping that you are now going to work just as hard in mathematics and science to be as good in those subjects.

In Reception, it was good to see each one of you getting so much help from your teacher and her helper when learning new things. I hope that your teacher will plan harder and more interesting things for you next term to grab your attention, make you think and be even more excited about coming to school.

I am not surprised that everyone is happy at St Ann's and that attendance is so good. No one wants to miss out on learning French and Spanish or taking part in all the after-school activities. It was good to meet one of the school governors and I liked what he was telling me. It is obvious that all the governors are keen to help the school to get even better. The headteacher has worked so hard and it is plain to see how proud all the staff are to see things improving so much. I hope that all of you will carry on trying so hard and thank you all again for making me feel so welcome.