

St Theresa's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107158
Local Authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	309334
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Judith Tolley

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	250
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Caesar
Headteacher	Mr P Nelis
Date of previous school inspection	29 March 2004
School address	Prince of Wales Road Sheffield South Yorkshire S2 1EY
Telephone number	0114 239 7251
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils attending St Theresa's Catholic Primary School are predominantly of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is high. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The school is in an area of high social and economic deprivation. The school is now emerging from a lengthy period of instability. Following a threat of closure in 2002 it encountered significant difficulties in recruiting staff although staffing is now more stable.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage and pupils' achievement and standards in science. The school provides inadequate value for money.

Children start school with much lower levels of skill than generally expected for their age. Communication skills are particularly low. As a result of inadequate provision and management in the Foundation Stage, which is recognised by the school, children underachieve and do not acquire the necessary skills to begin the National Curriculum when they start Year 1. This slows their progress in Years 1 and 2, although it is satisfactory overall. Standards by the end of Year 2 show an improving trend in English and mathematics but remain significantly below average. Overall, standards at the end of Year 6 were significantly below average in 2007. However, they have improved for the current Year 6, particularly in English and mathematics and pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. In English, pupils reach broadly average standards. Given their low levels of literacy and communication skills when they start school this represents good progress. There remains underachievement in science in Key Stages 1 and 2. The school has correctly identified the need to improve major aspects of this subject. Pupils with learning difficulties and or/disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This, together with well reasoned school self-evaluation and the recent upturn in standards, indicates a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. Systems for tracking pupils' progress have recently been introduced so that any underachievement in English and mathematics can be quickly identified and addressed, but the full impact of these is yet to be seen. However, actions taken to arrest the decline in standards and eliminate underachievement in science have not yet been successful. Although teachers record pupils' progress on a regular basis, this information is not systematically gathered or analysed and as a result standards in this subject continue to fall. While the school recognises the need to improve provision in the Foundation Stage and has plans in place for a systematic programme of support in this area next year, action taken to date has not had time to take full effect.

Teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory; some lessons are good. Teachers have to work hard to overcome the poor start children get in the Foundation Stage. Overall, the impact of teaching on learning is satisfactory and enables pupils to make up some of the ground lost. The curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory. The school is adapting its learning programmes to enable pupils to bridge earlier gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities and visits.

Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are very positive, their behaviour is good and they form good relationships with adults in the school. They take their work seriously and are keen to learn. They say they enjoy school and Year 6 pupils play an important role in the day-to-day running of the school. School attendance is average and attendance at the breakfast club is good. These are clear endorsements of pupils' very positive attitudes towards school. Pastoral care is good. Teachers know pupils well and the school works well with parents, many of whom

are actively involved in the everyday life of the school, for instance helping out at the breakfast club and as teaching assistants.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

The quality of leadership, teaching, learning and the curriculum is inadequate. As a result, children's low attainment on entry to the Nursery is not built upon rapidly enough and their progress is inadequate. This means that the standards they reach at the end of the Reception year are far too low and many are ill-prepared for work in Year 1. Many are reluctant speakers and most find it very difficult to work in partnership to help each other learn. Often tasks and resources are not well enough matched to children's needs. Records of their achievement in the Nursery are not used sufficiently well. The lack of good support for the teaching prevents children's learning from progressing as it should. As a result of this lack of support, the teaching group is often too large and children are expected to remain seated for periods of time far beyond the concentration level of most. Expectations of what children can achieve in the Foundation Stage are low: often children are expected to complete identical work which fails to challenge those capable of learning quickly and may be too difficult for slower learners. Children are allowed to move between tasks whether they complete them or not. This does not encourage their concentration or their satisfaction in learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision in the Foundation Stage in order to raise standards and achievement.
- Raise standards and achievement in science at Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Improve the rigour and effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress in science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils begin Key Stage 1 with skills that are well below those expected for their age because of the inadequate start they receive to their education in the Foundation Stage. Many are not sufficiently prepared to follow the National Curriculum. As a result, and despite teachers' best efforts, they struggle to catch up in their learning and standards remain significantly below average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. However, this represents satisfactory achievement for pupils in Key Stage 1 given the low standards with which they started Year 1.

In Key Stage 2, overall standards at Year 6 in 2007 were significantly below average. This was a decline on previous years, mainly because of weaker performance in mathematics and science; English standards remained broadly average. Standards in the current Year 6 are now broadly average in English and mathematics. This represents satisfactory achievement since this cohort of pupils entered Key Stage 2 and reflects the satisfactory achievement overall in Key Stage 2, and good progress in English. In science achievement is inadequate and standards have not risen because assessment and monitoring have not been used well enough to help pupils make faster progress. Furthermore, an overuse of work sheets in science fails to challenge higher attaining pupils effectively and inhibits pupils' independence. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Because relationships are good, pupils are confident that if they have any concerns or problems, staff will help them. They say that any incidents of bullying or racism are sorted out quickly. Pupils enjoy school and want to learn. They behave well in lessons, are responsible and care for others at play time and lunchtimes. They have a satisfactory understanding of what it means to be part of a community although it is only in Year 6 that any significant responsibility is given to them. Pupils in Years 1 to 5 say they would like more opportunity to take responsibility. Pupils mostly adopt a healthy lifestyle although they say that not all eat as healthily as they should. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe. They very much appreciate the headteacher's message prior to each weekend when they are urged, 'Do not switch your minds off - keep safe'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall and has some strengths. On entry to Year 1 many pupils have a significant amount of ground to make up in their learning because of weaknesses in provision in the Foundation Stage. This hinders their learning in Years 1 and 2, despite teachers' best efforts to fill the gaps in their knowledge. Where teaching is more effective, for example in some lessons observed in Years 3 and 5, detailed planning enables groups of all abilities to complete tasks successfully. In these lessons presentations are clear so that pupils quickly understand new ideas. Teachers use questioning effectively to support and extend learning and teaching assistants give good support. Pupils respond with excitement to opportunities to work in groups, explore for themselves, discuss ideas with others or solve problems. In less successful lessons, pupils' needs are not always taken sufficiently into account so that some find tasks too easy or too difficult or are too reliant upon help from the teacher. Opportunities are missed for pupils to work collaboratively and plan investigations for themselves, particularly in science. In addition, opportunities to develop the skills of literacy and numeracy in science are missed because the use of worksheets limits pupils' responses to single words and short phrases. Although pupils do well in English they are not always sufficiently challenged by written work set in other subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school is adapting the curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 to enable pupils to make up the gaps in their knowledge and understanding. 'Curriculum boards' help parents, from the Nursery onwards, see at a glance what their children are learning and give them guidance about how they can support their children at home. Breakfast club, which is well attended by parents and pupils alike, enhances pupils' personal development and, through aerobic activities, their understanding of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils' experience is broadened by a range of visits, including a residential trip for Year 6, visiting theatre groups, artists and authors. Pupils take part in whole-school performances such as the Nativity and the Passion plays and participate in a good range of after-school activities including sports, computer club, drama, art and the choir. The Nursery and Reception classes are housed together which ensures a smooth transition

between these two year groups, and there are satisfactory links with the high school. Literacy and numeracy skills are generally developed effectively through other subjects but there is still considerable scope to develop these skills in science.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of pastoral care is good. It is well led by the headteacher and effectively supported by other staff. Attendance is satisfactory and improving because the school has good systems to ensure regular attendance. The family atmosphere as school opens each day is a mark of the school's success in helping parents become part of their children's learning. A highly popular breakfast club ensures that many families have a good start to the school day. Arrangements for health and safety, including child protection and safeguarding, meet requirements. Academic guidance is satisfactory overall. As a result, pupils mostly understand what they need to do to improve their work. They say that marking helps them to attain their targets for learning. However, this is not so in science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are generally well supported by teaching assistants in lessons but the practice of withdrawing these pupils from their classes is less effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership of the school ensures that it works effectively with parents and that the pastoral care of the pupils is good. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses and is taking action to tackle the main areas that require improvement. It recognises that standards have fallen significantly in science and continue to do so and that provision in the Foundation Stage is inadequate, although the impact of its actions in relation to these weaknesses is not yet fully evident. Self-evaluation is satisfactory but over-generous in places. Teachers record pupils' progress in science on a regular basis but this information is not systematically gathered or analysed. As a result, standards in science continue to fall. Governors provide satisfactory support and act as critical friends. During the period of recent staffing instability the headteacher ensured that the day-to-day running of the school was maintained.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	3

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of St Theresa's Catholic Primary School, Sheffield, S2 1EY

I would like to thank you all for making the inspectors so welcome when we visited your school recently to see how well you are learning. We enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views.

Some things about your school are good. For example, you enjoy school, behave well and have a good understanding of how to keep safe. We also noticed how well you help one another and how well you get on with the adults in your school. You are well looked after. Very importantly, too, you make good progress in English.

Unfortunately, we judge that at present in some very important respects your school is not giving you the standard of education it should and that it needs a 'notice to improve' to help it improve. This means that your school will receive extra help from people outside the school and an inspector will visit again to check that everything is going to plan. It is our job as inspectors to help schools by telling them what needs to get better and so we have asked for the following to be improved:

- the way younger children learn and make progress in the Foundation Stage
- how well you achieve in science in Years 1 to 6
- how well the school checks your progress in science in order to give you the help you need to do better.

We think that the adults who run your school know what to do to improve it and we are confident that they can be successful in doing so. The school has had some difficulties until recently in making sure your learning is not affected by changes in teachers. Your headteacher has tried to make sure things ran smoothly despite these difficulties. You have all helped him a lot through your good behaviour and your eagerness to learn. You can carry on helping your school to improve by continuing to behave well, work hard and enjoy your learning. We wish you every success in the future.