

St Edward's Catholic Primary School, Boston Spa

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108012
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	309567
Inspection date	15 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Lesley Clark

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	124
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms C Brooks
Headteacher	Miss A Gilpin
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2004
School address	Westwood Way Boston Spa Wetherby West Yorkshire LS23 6DL
Telephone number	01937 843946
Fax number	0

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; pupils' personal development; and the overall effectiveness of the school. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, pupils' work, discussions with staff, governors and pupils, and a scrutiny of school documents and questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school takes pupils from a widespread area, including the village of Boston Spa where it is situated. Numbers are growing because it has a good reputation. Almost all pupils are White British and from Catholic families. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little below average but there is a small group with significant difficulties or disabilities. The school has four partnerships with specialist secondary schools. This enables it to offer specialist arts provision including drama, a wide range of sporting opportunities, and enhanced learning resources for information and communication technology (ICT) and the humanities. The school is an Investor in People and holds the Activemark Gold, the National Healthy Schools and Leeds Advanced Healthy Schools awards as well as the Intermediate International Schools Award.

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 an outstanding school where pupils learn exceptionally well. The school fully meets its aim: 'For all children to reach their potential academically, spiritually, morally, socially, creatively and physically.' This is because of outstanding leadership and management, an exceptionally rich curriculum, outstanding teaching quality, and excellent care, support and guidance for all learners. Partnerships with other schools make an outstanding contribution to pupils' well-being. Pupils say, 'We'd like the school to be a bit bigger but apart from that it's perfect.' They especially like the teachers, explaining, 'You can have a conversation with them. The fun in the lessons makes you work hard and gives you confidence.'

Standards are high and achievement is outstanding. Recognising the pupils' above average starting points when they enter Year 1, the school expects them to progress at a much more rapid rate than usual and, therefore, sets challenging targets at each stage of their education. The checking of pupils' progress is so finely tuned that as soon as a pupils' progress slows, the school quickly intervenes and helps. This ensures that no one falls behind. Consequently, results in national tests at the end of Year 2 are consistently well above average. By the end of Year 6, the value added by the school placed it in the top 1% nationally in 2007, compared to the top 4% in 2006. The trend in the school's results is upwards and the school regularly exceeds its very challenging targets at end of Year 6. Part of the school's success is due to its outstanding provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Skilled support from teaching assistants together with very well thought out individual education plans enable all with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to reach nationally expected standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Equally, more able pupils are exceptionally well challenged. Pupils with special gifts and talents have individual education plans which ensure that they, too, make outstanding progress. As a result, two-thirds of pupils consistently exceed expected levels in English and mathematics and almost all pupils exceed them in science.

Standards in the current Years 2 and 6 show further improvement still. This is because of outstanding teaching quality and exceptional leadership which analyses carefully where the weaknesses are and sets about improving them systematically and rigorously. Literacy and numeracy are fully integrated into other subjects and so pupils have lots of opportunities to use their skills for a purpose. Lessons are skilfully balanced between intensive taught time in small groups and extended periods when pupils work on their own. Questioning is a notable strength, challenging pupils to think for themselves.

The key to the school's success is the extent to which pupils learn independently. For example, in science, pupils regularly decide the question they want to investigate and select their own resources in order to find the solution. They, therefore, learn a great deal about the importance of fair testing and working methodically. It is a similar picture in other subjects too. They assess their own learning and, therefore, learn from their mistakes. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are expected to set their own challenges and to lead others. This aids their personal development which is outstanding. For example, older pupils take the Friday Celebration assemblies, to which all parents are invited, and they devise and teach the routines for the daily physical exercise designed to 'wake up and shake up' both staff and pupils at the start of afternoon school. In Lent, pupils in each class organise stalls to raise money for charities and for their partner schools in other countries. This contributes to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through the democratically elected school council pupils raise money for play equipment which older pupils then supervise, taking turns at being play leaders and 'buddies'

so that everyone has something and someone to play with. No wonder then that behaviour is exemplary and attendance consistently above average.

Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their future lives because of this high level of independence and their extremely good basic skills. They have an excellent awareness of why it is important to lead healthy lives, demonstrated in their sporting successes in local competitions and the produce from their vegetable garden. The school's strong commitment to caring for pupils as individuals shows in the efforts made by staff to ensure that their varying needs are understood and provided for. Consequently, pupils feel safe, know who to go to for help and receive extremely good support whenever they need it. The school's safeguarding procedures fully meet current government guidelines.

The school's self-evaluation accurately evaluated pupils' achievements and personal development as outstanding but judged all aspects of its provision to be good. This arose from a genuine sense that there is always more to be done to improve further. The school improvement plan, based on regular verification of pupils' progress and the effectiveness of teaching, shows a purposeful sense of direction. Currently, all staff include an international dimension to their lessons as part of the school's drive to expand its multicultural provision beyond a yearly international week and European day. Governance is outstanding, offering a sensitive balance of support and challenge based on thorough knowledge of the school from regular checks on its effectiveness. The school has outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

From broadly average starting points children make rapid progress throughout the Reception year. By the start of Year 1 the majority are working securely above nationally expected levels. They make exceptional progress in communication, language, literacy and mathematical development because these skills are extremely well taught. The curriculum is good, offering a balance of taught activities and those which children learn through finding out for themselves. The range of activities on offer indoors is wider than that offered outdoors and so children who choose to work outside cannot access all areas of learning equally well. Children are extremely well cared for and, consequently, their readiness for learning comes on apace. By the end of the year they concentrate for long periods of time, play purposefully together and talk and ask questions because they have become curious learners. Teaching is lively and follows children's lead extremely well. This is why children make excellent progress. The provision is outstandingly well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the outdoor provision for Foundation Stage children so they can learn equally well outdoors as indoors.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making me so welcome and for talking to me so readily when I visited your school. I enjoyed meeting so many of you and looking at your work. Your work in English, mathematics and science is extremely good. Your school gives you an outstanding education and prepares you exceptionally well for your future lives. You thoroughly enjoy learning because your teachers take care to make lessons fun and interesting. Your behaviour is excellent. You work hard but also play hard too. I was glad to see you have lots of different games to play with and that older children organise games for the younger ones. I was impressed at how much responsibility pupils in Years 5 and 6 have; for example, teaching everyone the 'wake up and shake up' routines and also setting their own challenges in science and other subjects. This is why you all get on so well together and reach high standards in your work. You make exceptionally good progress because your teachers expect so much of you. Your school is extremely well led and managed and this is why it knows what it has to do to get even better.

I noticed that Reception children had more activities to interest them indoors compared to outdoors. So, I have suggested that your school extend the outdoor activities so that it does not matter whether young children choose to work inside or outside, they will learn equally well wherever they are.