

# St Catherine's Roman Catholic School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113823
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	311389
<b>Inspection date</b>	3 December 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Deborah Zachary

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	123
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Andrew Lobb
<b>Headteacher</b>	Veronique Singer
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 May 2008
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Pymore Road Bridport DT6 3TR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01308 423568

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	3 December 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	311389

**Fax number**

01308 421291

<b>Age group</b>	4-11
<b>Inspection date</b>	3 December 2008
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Though a comparatively small school, St Catherine's draws its pupils from a wide catchment area. Most attend the St Catherine's Pre School, on the same site but run by a separate provider, before entering Reception. The Reception year forms the last year of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and have a very wide range of abilities, though the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little below average. The large majority of pupils are of White British ethnicity but a small number have English as an additional language.

The school has been through a turbulent period since the last inspection, with a change of headteacher and significant periods of staff absence. The current headteacher took up her post in September 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Catherine's is a good school. It has undergone extraordinary improvement in the last year under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, following a period of turbulence that led to a big drop in standards and achievement after the previous inspection. Standards are now above average again and achievement is good. Staff morale has been rebuilt and inadequate teaching addressed. Parents recognise the progress made, with one speaking for many by writing simply: 'I am very happy with this school.'

Year 6 results recovered during the academic year 2007/08, with a very steep rise in English and science. Results in mathematics also rose, but not to the same degree. Standards in the current Year 6 have been maintained at these levels, with some further improvement in mathematics. Results in Year 2 suggested some underachievement last year, but the school's tracking information shows that both the current Year 2 and the previous Year 2, who are presently in Year 3, are now making good progress. The improvements to progress throughout the school, including in the EYFS, are largely due to much better teaching. It is now good overall but still variable: some is extremely strong and some satisfactory. Teaching in English tends to be stronger than in mathematics. Nevertheless, the pupils say they greatly enjoy their lessons, and this was evident during the inspection.

Pupils' personal development did not drop to the same degree as academic achievement, but it has also improved. Pupils' behaviour is now good, and so is their understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe. They make a good contribution to each other's well-being and the development of the school, through, for example, their roles as playground leaders and school council members. The older pupils have a good understanding of how to work well in groups, and the roles that people take when working together. They are aware of the range of cultures and faiths locally, in Britain and in the wider world, and are being well prepared for their future lives.

The headteacher enjoys the wholehearted support of staff and governors, and they all demonstrate a high level of commitment to improvement. Together, they have implemented new systems for planning and made needed changes to the school environment. Tracking of pupils' progress is now highly detailed and teaching is closely monitored. The school development plan identifies exactly what still needs to be done. Leadership and management are good overall. Much has been done to establish a secure senior leadership team and middle managers who are appropriately handling subject responsibilities. The challenge for the school now is to move further away from reliance on the outstanding management of the headteacher. For example, assessment of pupils' performance has been mostly through yearly tests, which have identified long-term progress. Ideas about ongoing assessment of levels of work are only now being embedded. The school has rightly recognised that teachers and subject leaders have not been sufficiently involved in analysis of pupils' shorter-term progress.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Teaching is good. The adults have a good rapport with the children, who gain in confidence as a result. Visual aids such as 'Dolly the Dragon' are used very well to gain children's attention and develop well focused activities. During the inspection, for example, the children had to identify a wide range of objects that started with the same 'sh' sound, which they greatly

enjoyed. There is a good balance of teacher-led and more independent learning. When the children are carrying out less formal activities, all staff interact with them well, and this ensures that the pace of learning is good and that children of differing abilities receive the right amount of challenge. As a result, progress is good and behaviour is of a high standard. Last year, children entered the EYFS with attainment that was broadly as expected nationally, and by the time they moved into Year 1 their standards were above average. The EYFS is led and managed well. Links with parents are extremely good and they appreciate the good care their children receive and the way the teacher is available to talk to them, for example through the coffee mornings. Links with the on-site pre-school are also very strong. The curriculum is well planned and the outdoor area is an integral part of learning when the weather permits – on the day of the inspection it was particularly cold. The outdoor environment has a satisfactory range of equipment and facilities, but the school is aware that it does not have many toys and activities to support the development of fine motor skills outdoors.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve teaching where it is satisfactory rather than good, particularly in mathematics.
- Widen the delegation of leadership and management to teachers at a range of levels, developing their knowledge of ongoing assessment of pupils' progress and its analysis.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

In 2007, Year 6 results were average but significant numbers of pupils underachieved, especially in mathematics. Last year, Year 6 pupils made very good progress in English, good progress in science, and much slower though broadly satisfactory progress in mathematics. The current Year 6 pupils are on track to reach very challenging targets that would again represent above average standards, and put their progress in the top 25% of schools nationally. Some Year 2 pupils underachieved last year, particularly lower attainers in reading. Assessments show that the current Year 2 have made good progress since the end of the EYFS and they are on track to reach much higher standards, even though the year group contains pupils with significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress in line with that of their peers, as do the most able pupils.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are very aware, following work on anti-bullying, of behaviour that might be hurtful. They say that teachers do their utmost to help if any minor problems take place, and that they feel safe in school. Behaviour is often very good in lessons but pupils can be quite excited in the playground. They particularly enjoy 'rise and shine' exercises, which give them a chance to 'burn off energy' before school starts, and they appreciate the benefits to their health. They are also well aware of the benefits of healthy eating, and many enjoy the hot school lunches. They are growing vegetables in the newly revamped school garden and took part in the Bridport food festival. Though pupils much enjoy school and the many activities available, attendance is no better than average. The few persistent absences are followed up well by the headteacher, in teamwork with outside agencies where needed, and the school is reducing the number of holidays taken in term time.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Lesson planning is very effective, and different activities are clearly identified for pupils of different abilities. All teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn in the lesson, and explain these objectives well so the pupils themselves can take some responsibility for their learning. Teaching assistants, too, make a major contribution in ensuring all pupils are involved and challenged. Teachers often use imaginative ideas and stimulating visual aids to get the pupils' interest. As a result, pupils are very keen to give their ideas and be involved. During the inspection, such effective activities included a pupil jumping along a laid out number line, pupils brainstorming adjectives from a wide range of pictures, and a 'tree of words'. Communication skills are developed particularly well, for example with the aid of 'talk partners' for sharing ideas in pairs or work in groups. In one excellent part of a lesson, pupils were examining and using a range of musical instruments to develop explanation skills. They worked in threes or fours with different structured roles, learning technical vocabulary from each other. In mathematics, where lessons or parts of lessons are less effective, both inspection observations and the school's own monitoring show that there is sometimes a discontinuity between the introductory part of the lesson and the main activities. Teachers do not always make sure pupils fully understand the method to be used when they go to start an exercise, so pupils sometimes become confused and progress is slowed.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The school curriculum and its organisation have been very effectively focused on raising standards since the headteacher's arrival. Last year, for example, teachers and staff with particular expertise were very effectively deployed with Year 6 groups to raise standards in English. This year, able mathematicians in Years 4, 5 and 6 benefit from some lessons in which they are separated from the rest of the year group for advanced teaching. Curricular planning is now secure, though in some year groups there are gaps in pupils' understanding due to slower progress in the past. The school is in the process of identifying and filling these gaps through developing teachers' abilities to assess pupils' understanding on an ongoing basis and analyse what this shows. Beyond the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, music is a particular strength. Visitors to the school and visits out, including the regular 'welly walks' for the younger pupils, bring an added dimension to learning. Many pupils enjoy the good range of lunchtime and after-school clubs.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Pupils recognise the good care given to them by adults in the school, and enjoy the good relationships they have with teachers and support staff. Requirements for child protection are applied rigorously. The school is well aware that the environment around it – the slopes, steps and parking – could present hazards, and is constantly exploring ways of reducing risk. Support and guidance are also good, and the school uses outside expertise well where necessary. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their needs met well, as do those who have English as an additional language. Marking is good, and many teachers helpfully refer back to lesson objectives when they mark. Pupils know their targets and find them useful.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

On arrival, the headteacher identified very accurately the many areas which needed improvement in the school. She prioritised these extremely well and, with the good support of the governors and the local authority, put excellent strategies into action. Improving teaching was essential, but so was raising morale, convincing staff of the changes that were necessary and giving them the right training. This many-pronged approach has paid dividends. The school community is now highly cohesive. Working with teachers, the headteacher introduced rigorous planning that included a strong focus on identifying what pupils should be learning as opposed to just what they would be doing. Curricular changes were also made to support better personal development and raise Key Stage 2 achievement. Links with other schools blossomed and those with the church were renewed. Governors are now well aware of what is going on in the school and challenge its performance effectively. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

Leadership has started to be successfully delegated. For example, the assistant headteacher is supporting Key Stage 1 teaching well and the literacy leader has identified new literacy initiatives. Subject leaders are aware of what needs to be done and have carried out monitoring of pupils' work, but they are not as yet taking responsibility for driving subject development forward at full pace. Monitoring of lessons is starting to be carried out by a range of staff. Observations are recorded clearly but at the moment points to improve about teaching, though often matters of fine tuning, are discussed rather than formally noted.



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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which 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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

**Annex B**

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

4 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Catherine's Roman Catholic School, Bridport DT6 3TR

Thank you for welcoming us to St Catherine's yesterday. A special thank you to those of you who told us what it feels like to be a pupil here. Those of you who are older will know that there have been many changes of teacher and headteacher over the last few years. We were really pleased to find, though, that the school has come through the changes and it is now giving you a good education.

Teaching has improved a lot lately and you told us how much you enjoy your lessons now. You are making good progress, especially in English. Your behaviour is good, but you can get quite excited at playtime. Please remember not to run too fast and to take great care if you are going up or down the slope and steps. We know you will do this because you are very aware about health and safety. You also understand about being careful of each other's feelings and helping others in the community.

We have asked the school to do two things in order to improve further.

- Improve teaching even more where it isn't quite as good, especially in mathematics.
- Make sure that all the teachers are fully involved in helping the headteacher to check on your progress and improve the school.

With best wishes for the future

Deborah Zachary Lead inspector