

St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, Weymouth

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113837
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311396
Inspection dates	14–15 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Clifton

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	
School	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rose Bruce
Headteacher	Stephen Mason
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004
School address	Hardy Avenue Weymouth DT4 0RH
Telephone number	01305 782600
Fax number	01305 788038

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size school. Pupils attend from a wide area due to its Catholic nature. Nearly all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. There are increasing numbers of pupils coming into the school with English as an additional language. Children enter Reception mainly from the pre-school provision, which has a separate teaching area but shares several facilities in the school. The headteacher has been at the school for about one year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Augustine's is a good school with some outstanding features. Pupils enjoy their time here, their behaviour is outstanding and most attend regularly. Standards are above average and achievement is good, mainly because of good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes. Provision in Reception is good and children settle very well because of the exceptionally strong links with the pre-school providers. The new headteacher is highly focused on raising achievement while maintaining a strong Catholic ethos. A number of initiatives are in place to improve standards in the school, such as in writing. These are built on leaders' exceptional understanding of what needs to be improved. There is a good capacity to improve even further.

Parents' comments are very largely positive and several recognise recent improvement. They value the Christian ethos of the school, its 'family' atmosphere and the good level of care which ensures that pupils feel very safe. Typical comments that summed the school up well were, 'The school provides our children with a good education combined with an excellent sense of community. We have seen the school improve greatly over the past year.' Pupils also are very complimentary and say, 'School is a safe, happy place and people are very friendly'. They say they have to work hard, and enjoy visits related to their work in topics.

Leaders have recently introduced measures to strengthen pupils' understanding of how well they are doing and to help pupils assess their own work. Consequently, pupils have a growing understanding of the targets that they are working towards. However, leaders have recognised that these measures are not yet firmly established across the school. Marking is regular and acknowledges what pupils have learned and the effort they have made. Nevertheless, identification of what the pupils need to do next to improve their work is much less consistent.

Pupils say they enjoy sport and have a good understanding about being healthy. They have a clear voice in the school and are keen to contribute through taking on additional responsibilities. They work well together and are well motivated to do better. In lessons, pupils concentrate well and help each other to learn. Teachers create a positive and secure atmosphere for learning. There are many good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills through discussion and questioning. Consequently, pupils express themselves clearly and explain their thinking confidently. Topics are organised to build successfully on pupils' previous learning and understanding, particularly in English and mathematics. However, links between subjects are not sufficiently well developed and therefore, opportunities are missed to develop skills across the curriculum. Despite this, pupils make good progress in developing basic skills. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they are well prepared for the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Excellent use of shared facilities and frequent communication with the pre-school ensure that children settle very quickly and happily in Reception. The good learning environment helps the children to learn independently very well across all areas of learning. The curriculum is very securely based on practical first-hand experiences and helps the children make good progress, especially in speaking and listening and personal and social development. Teaching assistants play an important role in directing the children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure marking gives pupils a clear understanding about how they can improve, and involve them more consistently in evaluating their own work
- improve links between subjects so that skills can be practised and developed more regularly in different contexts.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children come into school with skills and abilities that are broadly in line with expectations. In the Reception Year, children make good progress and by the time they enter Year 1, the majority of them are working securely within the goals expected for their age. Current standards in Year 2 are above average. Pupils reached average standards in the 2007 Year 2 tests. However, this group of pupils had an unusually high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. Year 6 results in 2007 show that standards were well above average in mathematics and broadly average in English and science. Current standards are above average in all three subjects. Recent improvements in the provision for writing in particular are now securely lifting standards in English. Across the school, rates of learning and progress are good because of pupils' very positive attitudes and good teaching. Leaders keep a very careful watch on the small minority of pupils who are not doing well enough, and provide additional help and support to enable them to catch up. Pupils with English as an additional language make rapid progress in acquiring English language skills and this helps them to make progress similar to other pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in relation to their individual learning targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' outstanding behaviour and very positive attitudes make a considerable contribution to their learning. Their spiritual and moral development is outstanding, because of the plentiful opportunities for them to reflect on their own and other people's lives. They feel very safe and secure. Despite pupils' obvious enjoyment of school, a few attend irregularly and this affects their progress. In addition, there have been a significant number of absences because of families taking holidays in term time, which leaders are rightly addressing firmly.

Pupils have a clear voice in the school and enjoy taking on a wide range of additional responsibilities such as organising raising money for charity or being prefects. However, some pupils feel that they could take a stronger role in decision-making.

At break times, the pupils are very active. The pupils enjoy each other's company when playing together. However, there is little equipment provided to enhance their experience. This is a healthy school. The pupils say they particularly like the additional opportunities to take part in sport. Several pupils bring in fruit to eat.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers promote very strong relationships and ensure that pupils have good opportunities to explain their views and understanding. Consequently, pupils are very confident. They are keen

to answer questions or give their opinions. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed and they often explain their thinking clearly. Lessons are usually planned well, catering for the needs of different pupils, with previous learning carefully reviewed. On a few occasions, the work given is too complex for some pupils or not sufficiently challenging. When this happens, the pace of learning slows.

A good feature of lessons is the way in which the pupils collaborate to find answers to problems or direct their own learning, such as in guided reading. They work together confidently because teachers have fostered independence in learning from the time they come into school. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution in helping with pupils learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Personal and social education is strong and sensitively provides for pupils' needs. There are excellent opportunities for the pupils to explore values and beliefs. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage provides many good opportunities for the children to develop speaking and listening skills. Good provision is made for pupils with English as an additional language to help develop their English language skills.

Topics are suitably planned to cover all subjects, but opportunities are missed to develop skills such as writing across the curriculum. However, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is developing well to support pupils in their work. Provision to improve key skills in literacy and numeracy has been strengthened recently through a number of curriculum changes. Skills in writing are being given a sharp focus and this is helping to improve standards in English.

Strong links with other schools in the area, such as the 'maths challenge' week, enhance pupils' experiences well. Pupils very much enjoy the good range of after-school activities and visits to different places. Growing links to schools in Poland and other countries are helping pupils to develop their understanding of European culture.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff are strongly committed to ensuring that pupils achieve well and enjoy learning safely. They know the pupils well. Pupils and parents rightly speak very highly of the school's welcoming nature and friendly atmosphere. Pupils feel very confident that any concerns they may have will be listened to. Arrangements for keeping the pupils safe are robust, with all appropriate statutory checks in place. The school promotes regular attendance well. There are good arrangements in place to support pupils with English as an additional language who come with few English language skills. Year 6 pupils think they are very well prepared for their next school.

Recent initiatives to strengthen pupils' understanding about how well they are doing and help them assess their own work have been particularly successful in some classes. However, the success of this is patchy and these improvements are not yet firmly established across the school. Marking often provides good encouragement but does not consistently identify next steps for learning to guide pupils in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The new headteacher has had a major influence in bringing about improvement. There is a common focus on raising standards and achievement. Evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is highly robust and this information is used very well to identify areas for development. Good leadership from the headteacher and governors has resulted in successful teamwork. The governors are very active in the school and ready to challenge leaders. They are knowledgeable about issues in the school and this enables them to provide a good level of support. They have been influential in successfully steering the school through a period of change in leadership.

Systems for tracking pupils' progress and rigorous monitoring of provision are securely in place, enabling teachers to quickly identify any underachievement and provide extra help and support as necessary. Targets set for improvement are challenging. Subject leaders are developing their monitoring and evaluation work securely.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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 disabilities make progress	2

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	2
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	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

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	1
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

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

Dear Pupils Inspection of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, Weymouth DT4 0RH

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and were very impressed with your friendliness and confidence. The valuable information you gave us was a great help. We think your school gives you good care and support and a good education and has some excellent features. The curriculum and teaching are good and you are making good progress. Leadership of your school is good. Leaders have an outstanding understanding of what needs to be improved.

What we most liked about your school:

- your headteacher is helping the school to improve well
- you enjoy school greatly, have very positive attitudes to learning and your behaviour is outstanding
- you settle quickly in Reception because of the very regular contact with your pre-school
- there are excellent opportunities for you to explore values and beliefs
- there are strong links with your parents or carers
- the school ensures you are very safe and secure
- teachers ensure you have many good opportunities to develop you ideas through discussion.

We have asked your headteacher and others to do these things:

- improve marking so you have a clearer understanding about how to improve, and involve you more in evaluating your own work
- improve how subjects are linked together so that you can practise your skills more regularly.

With your hard work and help, we think that your school will continue to improve.

Yours faithfully

Peter Clifton Lead Inspector