

Cottesmore St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114567
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	311647
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	David Collard

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	436
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Armstrong
Headteacher	Anne O'Sullivan
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2006
School address	The Upper Drive Hove BN3 6NB
Telephone number	01273 555811
Fax number	01273 555423

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school serves its local community. The majority of the pupils come from Catholic families. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is low. While there is an average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the proportion with statements for specific educational needs is low. The headteacher has been at the school for three years and the deputy headteacher for two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has come a long way in a short time and made dramatic improvement since 2005. There are a number of very strong features and some that are outstanding. The driving force behind the changes has come from the outstanding leadership qualities of the headteacher who is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher, the staff and governors. The highly accurate self-evaluation, linked to thorough analysis of ongoing assessments, has pinpointed where the most important changes were needed. As these have been achieved, the priority areas have been very effectively refined. As a result, consistent teaching is evident in all year groups and because of this, pupils achieve well. One governor remarked, 'We have a desire to achieve, a desire to learn and a desire to question'.

Children start in the Reception class with standards above those usually expected and make a good start to their educational life. As they move through the school, pupils increasingly develop into mature, confident young people. They are articulate, inquisitive, polite and extremely well-behaved. They work hard, concentrate well and are proud of their school. They greatly enjoy being involved in the wide range of activities during lessons as well as after school and at weekends. There is a strong Christian ethos that permeates the work of the school. Relationships are very strong and parents are highly involved with their children's education. Returned parental questionnaires demonstrate this commitment very strongly and show that the well-being of the school is at the heart of the community.

All teaching is at least satisfactory, a significant proportion is good and there are examples of outstanding practice. The school's aim is to provide as many opportunities as possible for pupils to see the relevance and purpose of what they are learning and to make connections between different subjects. Good use is made of a wide variety of stimuli to encourage pupils to become more independent in their learning so that they can use their previously acquired knowledge in unfamiliar situations. This is ensuring that any legacy of underachievement is being addressed. Standards are above average. The latest national test results and teacher assessments, while not confirmed, indicate that more pupils achieved the higher Level 3 in Year 2 and Level 5 in Year 6. In addition, because of the way lessons are planned, pupils are being extremely well prepared for their futures and are developing excellent life-skills. There are a significant number of budding artists, musicians and sportspeople. However, these do not consistently receive the right level of support and challenge to enable them to reach their full potential. This is the next stage of improvement, rightly being targeted by the school.

The pastoral care of pupils is outstanding, a fact supported by discussions with the pupils, parents and staff. Pupils say that there is almost no bullying '...and anyway, it is dealt with quickly and effectively'. Regular communications through newsletters, bulletin boards and the school website ensure everybody is kept informed of developments and helps celebrate individual and group achievements. The excellent leadership and management of the school have been developed through utilising the strengths of individuals. Expertise is evident even though some of the middle and senior managers as well as some governors are still relatively inexperienced in their roles. Support for them is good and they are committed to improving their own levels of expertise. While not fully complete, the impact of their initiatives can be seen in the improved rates of progress of pupils, in the more creative approach to the curriculum and in excellent evaluation of assessment information to develop specific programmes and targeted support. Undoubtedly, this is a school with an excellent capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children enter the Reception classes, their attainment is generally above the national expectation. Children in the current Reception class have made good progress, and they are now exceeding the expected goals in many areas of learning. The exception is writing, where progress, while satisfactory, is slower compared with other areas. Children are friendly and work collaboratively as a team. They demonstrate independence in their self-chosen activities and persist at tasks. They respond with great enjoyment to their learning environment, which provides them with a variety of stimulating opportunities. Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Adults work closely together and are led well, providing a good free-flow between indoor and outdoor play. Adults are also sensitive to the children's needs and support their personal development in many ways. Assessment procedures are well established but are not used well enough to direct future planning so that all activities speed up pupils' progress. Staff work well with parents, providing a smooth transfer of their children into the life of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils who demonstrate a marked aptitude in any subject to reach their full potential.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Analysis of both internal and external data provides significant evidence to show the good progress that pupils make. Although pupils started Year 1 with generally above average attainment, by the end of Years 2 and 6, even more pupils are achieving the levels higher than expected for their age, and virtually all pupils make more than the expected progress through the year. This has not always been the case and so teachers are also dealing with a legacy from low expectations about what pupils could achieve. These challenges mean that pupils, particularly in the upper years, have had to make up substantial ground in the last two years. A significant proportion of pupils have talents beyond those in reading, writing and numeracy. These include art, music, physical education and science. The school has identified who they are and has started a programme to give them more support. As yet, however, this is at too early a stage to have been fully effective.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected extremely well in their exemplary behaviour, positive attitudes towards learning, and outstanding attendance. They are very careful of their own and others' safety. While still developing, pupils have a good grasp of the importance of healthy lifestyles. They engage enthusiastically and diligently in physical activities and games, are sporting and when the time is right can be highly competitive. Pupils contribute very effectively to the school and wider community. They have an ever-increasing influence on decisions and participate enthusiastically in the school council. They are rightly proud of their contribution in improving the school's environment such as the vegetable plot and the provision of the scooter shed. In the community, they, along with their parents, participate in an extremely wide range of activities such as raising funds and supporting those who are less fortunate than they are. Outside events such as their very intensive involvement in the eco-project and local events

all contribute highly effectively to pupils' future economic well-being. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. In particular, they have a good understanding about the culture of other countries. However, their awareness of how this fits with our own cultural diversity in modern Britain is less well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There is usually an exciting buzz in lessons. Pupils settle quickly to what they are asked to do because teachers plan work that is interesting and challenging and work hard to excite interest. Good use is made of resources, including the interactive whiteboards, and pupils are encouraged to think for themselves. Adults are well deployed in the classroom to support personal, social and emotional development as well as pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils' lifeskills are highly developed. In lessons, this is a key planning area where simulations of real events, mathematics tasks linked to the developing world or pupils' own computer presentations are all examples that reflect their understanding. In some classes, assessment is not well used to refine planning to meet the needs of individuals. This is particularly the case for those who show they have a particularly marked aptitude, such as in art or technology.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy the challenge of a well-constructed curriculum that, in the main, caters for their needs and capabilities. It is significantly enriched by themed days and focus weeks. For example, an active link with Senegal is used as part of a 'One World Week' to enhance awareness in global citizenship. Teachers are keen to embrace new curriculum ideas and to work together to enliven children's learning. The school offers excellent extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport and music. There are high participation rates in the wealth of clubs, trips and activities. This aspect of school is greatly appreciated by pupils and contributes significantly to their love of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff and pupils value and respect each other. Pupils express much confidence in their teachers and support staff, knowing that any problems they face will be dealt with successfully. The school does extremely well in supporting the personal development of pupils, and arrangements for safeguarding children are robust. Staff sensitively support vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties. Academic guidance has been at the centre of the improved progress that pupils are making. Pupils are well aware of their learning targets and take account of them when doing their work. Marking is positive, regular and diagnostic.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and, along with the senior and middle managers, has formulated a clear vision for the future. They rightly recognise that there is work

to do on ensuring that the most talented pupils in the school do even better. The headteacher and her very able deputy have taken the school forward very effectively and, as a result, the school and its pupils are progressing very well. Other senior leaders and middle managers have been given the independence to help develop their skills, many of which are both innovative and successful. Leaders and managers at all levels feel valued and supported, and share in the headteacher's vision of a school in which each individual can succeed. School self-evaluation is outstanding and the school knows itself very well. Thorough analysis of both internal and national data has helped define where improvements will have the most effect and has ensured that the actions needed to improve teaching, support and guidance are targeted effectively. The impact of this leadership can be seen in the calm, purposeful and professional ethos that permeates the school. The governing body, some of whom are inexperienced in their new roles, give good support to the school and carry out their duties enthusiastically and effectively as 'critical friends'.

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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	1

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?	1
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	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?	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?	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	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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cottesmore St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Hove BN3 6NB

Thank you for making us so welcome during our recent visit. We thoroughly enjoyed hearing about all the great changes that have happened at your school and seeing you at work. You will not be surprised to know that we have said in our report that yours is a good school and that some things are excellent. As I promised some of you, I have included the main points below.

- You told us that you were proud of your school and we can see why. You are taught well, make good progress and really enjoy your work. You have many interesting things to do, both in lessons and in all the extra activities that you can take part in.
- We were particularly impressed with how very well you behaved and how polite and happy you were. We have said that you are being extremely well prepared for your futures. A good example was the 'Chocolate business' we saw in Year 6, which really gave everyone an insight into how businesses in other countries work.
- You also told us that you were looked after very well. We agree. As you said, there is very little bullying and everybody gets on very well in the playground.
- Your headteacher, along with the rest of the staff, has really moved the school on in the last couple of years. Consequently, you are reaching standards above those in many other schools. Keep up the good work!
- We could see that there were quite a few children who seem to have some great talent and the potential to be artists, technicians, sportspeople or musicians. We have asked that more opportunities are offered to help these children reach their full potential.

Finally, we would like to wish you all success for the future. You can continue to help improve the school by suggesting how you feel things can be developed and helping to make sure this happens. This will make your school one of the best!

Best wishes

David Collard

Lead Inspector