

# St Philip's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114569
<b>Local Authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	311649
<b>Inspection date</b>	20 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jacque Buttriss

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

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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	214
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Trevor Waller
<b>Headteacher</b>	Teresa Palmer
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 April 2005
<b>School address</b>	High Street New Town Uckfield TN22 5DJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01825 762032
<b>Fax number</b>	01825 748706

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

The impact of the current temporary leadership situation on the school's provision and on pupils' achievement and well-being.

The extent and quality of the school's self-evaluation processes, how outcomes are recorded and how priorities are identified.

The degree of improvement since the last inspection and the school's current capacity to make further improvements.

The inspector gathered evidence from the analysis of documents and progress data, discussions with the acting headteacher, chair of governors, staff and pupils, parents' questionnaire responses, analysis of pupils' work in their books and observations of lessons. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in as much detail.

## Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school in the town centre. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. There has been an acting headteacher since 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

This is a good school, which prepare pupils very well for their future lives. It has some outstanding features. Principal amongst these is the exceptionally high standards reached by learners through the school. Pupils make outstanding progress from the time they leave the Reception Year to the end of Year 6. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well and the more able pupils reach particularly high standards.

Many parents comment on the 'community spirit' of the school, which one typically describes as 'a very happy, vibrant school, constantly striving to improve.' A particular strength of the school is its excellent pastoral care, which results in pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. As one parent put it, 'pupils show a great deal of respect for one another and their teachers.' Indeed, excellent relationships are a distinctive feature of the school. As a result, pupils' behaviour is excellent. They thoroughly enjoy school and have highly positive attitudes to their learning. One parent reported 'Both my sons love coming to school. It really is the highlight of their day.'

Pupils demonstrate a good awareness of the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles. They enjoy the many popular sports opportunities and the 'healthy tuck shop' recently introduced by the school council. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and they know who to turn to if they have any worries or concerns. They say that bullying is very rare and that any incidents are immediately resolved. Attendance rates are exceptionally high and pupils say that 'school is a good place to be'. Indeed, when a Reception pupil was asked what she liked best about school, she did not hesitate in replying 'everything!' Pupils contribute well to their school community through the active school council and Year 6 pupils are particularly proud of their responsibilities as 'special friends' to Reception children. Pupils do contribute to the wider community, for example through their involvement in church services. However, this is an area that the school is planning to develop further. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

'There are some really fun activities in lessons, like explosions in science,' said one older pupil. Good teaching overall is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement. Some outstanding teaching challenges pupils to achieve very highly, for example in a strongly paced Year 5 mathematics lesson where all pupils could describe in great detail the properties of a variety of named triangles. However, the quality of teaching varies from class to class, so that in a few lessons pupils are overly directed and, as a result, are not sufficiently involved in evaluating and extending their own learning. The school is currently developing strategies to help pupils gain more independence and to have a better understanding of how they learn.

The good curriculum is enriched by a variety of popular activities and clubs, visits and visitors. The school is currently developing a more rounded creative curriculum to engage all learners more effectively and to link areas of learning together in interesting and motivating ways. This is, as one parent put it, 'making school a fun and interesting learning environment'. Pupils' writing skills are developed well across all subjects, with the result that writing has improved significantly across the school, from Year 2 to Year 6, and is often full of flair and imagination.

Teaching assistants provide particularly good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most older pupils know their individual learning targets, but this is not consistent across the school. Some teachers are now marking pupils' work with helpful suggestions which

indicate the next steps in the learning but, as this is inconsistent, too many pupils are unsure about what they need to do to improve their work.

The temporary leadership situation in the school has been unavoidable this year. However, the acting headteacher is generally well liked, respected and strongly supported by most parents. She successfully leads a very dedicated and supportive staff team. She is steadily developing all the staff's teaching and leadership skills in various ways. Indeed, teachers' eagerness to develop both their own and their collective expertise is successfully driving up the quality of teaching, resulting in pupils attaining even higher standards this year. Governors give good support to the school and fulfil their roles well. The local authority is giving excellent support to the school through its comprehensive support plan. Together with the school's own school improvement plan, appropriate priorities for development have been identified and actions are now successfully improving provision for all pupils. This demonstrates a good capacity to make further improvements. However, whilst the school has good self-evaluation processes, well supported by the local authority, and evidence shows successful actions based on the findings of self-evaluation, these outcomes are not collated and recorded on the key summary document, the school self-evaluation form. Without this summary, identification of areas for further improvement is not as clear as it might be.

Parents say they are 'delighted' that their children attend this 'cracking' school. 'Our son is thriving', commented one parent, whilst another wrote 'our children could not be happier'.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

This school gives Reception children a good start to their education. Children come into the school with skills and capabilities that are similar to those found nationally across all areas of learning. There have been a number of unavoidable staff changes during the early part of this school year, which affected the continuity of teaching and pupils' learning and progress. However, there is now good, settled teaching in the Reception class, with the result that pupils are currently making good progress and are on target to achieve broadly average standards by the end of their Reception year. Children are confident and secure in their lively and stimulating learning environment. They enjoy a wide range of motivating activities, all linked to their current topic, which clearly engage their interest so that they are keen to learn. Their behaviour is excellent and they are developing especially good personal and social skills and relationships. Their writing is improving well, but the lack of adjacent outdoor space means that there are too few opportunities for outdoor learning through play, which particularly constrains their physical development. However, plans are under way to reorganise provision so that in future, the Reception classroom will have its own secure outside learning area.

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

- Identify areas for school improvement more precisely by recording outcomes of the various self-evaluation processes.
- Enable all pupils to know how well they are doing and how to improve their work by helping them to set and review their own learning targets and by improving the consistency of teachers' marking.

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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?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	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	2
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	2
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?	2

<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.

## Annex A

**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 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

21 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Philip's Catholic Primary School, Uckfield TN22 5DJ

Thank you for being so friendly, polite and helpful when I came to inspect your school. You made me feel very welcome and I enjoyed talking with you. Yours is a good school with some outstanding features. It helps you to do some excellent work and cares for you very well.

These are the things I especially like about your school:

- You have great respect for one another and your behaviour is excellent. Well done!
- You enjoy school very much and are keen to do your best.
- Yours is an extremely caring school where you look after each other very well.
- You have good teachers who work very hard to help you make excellent progress and achieve exceptionally high standards.
- Your headteacher, teachers and governors are leading the school well and are working hard to make it even better.
- Your attendance at school is very high and you have very positive attitudes to your learning.
- Your parents and carers are very keen to help you with your learning and are pleased that you come to this school.

These are the things we think your school could do even better:

- Your headteacher and other leaders could be more precise in the way they record all the information that tells them how well the school is doing.
- The school could make better use of marking and help you set your own learning targets so that you can see how well you are doing and how to improve your work.

You could help by continuing to work hard and enjoy your lessons so that you keep up your excellent achievement. I would like to wish you lots of success in your future learning. Keep up the great work! Yours sincerely

Jacquie Buttriss Lead Inspector