

St Teresa's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 115165 |
| Local Authority | Essex |
| Inspection number | 311862 |
| Inspection dates | 12–13 June 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Mary Summers |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 198 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr J Van de Vyver |
| Headteacher | Mrs N Stevens |
| Date of previous school inspection | 13 October 2003 |
| School address | Ashingdon Road Rochford Essex SS4 1RF |
| Telephone number | 01702 547918 |
| Fax number | 01702 530193 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves pupils from a wide area. Most pupils are from White British families, with only a small number coming from minority ethnic backgrounds, including a few from Traveller families. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including speech, language and moderate learning difficulties, is below average. Very few pupils are entitled to free school meals.

The children's attainment on entry to the school is above national expectations in many areas of learning because they have a wide range of experiences when they are young. However, attainment in some key areas, communication, language and literacy, mathematical calculation and emotional development, is similar to that expected for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Teresa's Catholic Primary School provides a good education for its pupils. Pupils feel safe within the school's warm and welcoming environment. One parent, echoing the views of many said, 'The school is very caring and always has the best interests of the children at heart'.

Pupils enjoy school enormously. They especially like the way in which teachers encourage them to give their own personal responses to the tasks set. In Year 6 science lessons, for example, pupils are able to record their learning in diagrams and pictures as well as in conventional reports. Exit interviews with Year 6 pupils last year revealed that pupils felt there was too much emphasis on formal report writing, which hindered their motivation. Senior staff therefore reviewed the science curriculum to provide more opportunities for alternative methods of recording.

The curriculum is very well organised and provides pupils with a good range of relevant learning opportunities. There is a high emphasis on developing pupils' personal as well as their academic skills. Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils know how to keep safe from bullying, although they insist it is rare. They have a very well developed understanding of how to stay healthy. A high proportion take part in out-of-hours sports clubs. Pupils proudly serve on the school council and represent their school and community extremely well in music festivals and inter-school sports. All these personal qualities mean they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Standards have risen steadily over the past few years because of the school's work in improving the curriculum and strengthening assessment procedures. Pupils leave the school at levels that are above average for their age. This represents good achievement for the majority of pupils. However, gifted and talented pupils are capable of even faster progress and the school is in the early stages of developing its provision to address their needs. Pupils make outstanding progress in Reception and Year 1 because the teaching is exciting and challenging for children of all abilities. Progress is satisfactory in Years 2, 3 and 4 and accelerates in Years 5 and 6 because of variations in the quality of teaching.

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Relationships are positive and teachers go out of their way to overcome any barriers to learning that pupils might experience. Work is geared well to support pupils with learning difficulties. Occasionally however, lessons lack enough excitement to really motivate pupils and ensure they make the best possible progress.

Effective leadership teams oversee different parts of the school's work. Key leaders monitor performance well and successfully identify areas for improvement. Good teamwork and a shared commitment to meeting pupils' needs mean that the school is well placed to improve in the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage is led and managed extremely well. Induction procedures are thorough and mean that children start school happily and parents have a great deal of confidence in the school. The well-organised, theme-based curriculum promotes children's learning in an exciting way and is matched closely to their individual abilities. Stimulating displays involve children and celebrate their successes. Consistent routines and an excellent balance of different kinds

of activities ensure that they develop independence, share equipment sensibly and behave extremely well.

Adults work very effectively as a team. They check children's progress regularly and use the information exceptionally well to plan further activities. These enable children to build rapidly on their skills and knowledge, particularly their communication, language and literacy skills. Consequently, by the time they enter Year 1, standards are well above the level expected with children making outstanding progress, particularly in those areas where they were weaker on entry.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate of progress for pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4
- Extend the provision for gifted and talented pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well overall in Key Stage 1. From previously average standards at the end of Year 2, attainment has risen in the past three years. Pupils reached above average standards in 2007 and the latest assessments suggest that they will be exceptionally high this year. However, whilst pupils make outstanding progress in Year 1, it is only satisfactory in Year 2.

Standards at the end of Year 6 have been rising gradually over recent years. In 2007 standards were above average in English and were broadly average in mathematics and science, although mathematics was stronger than science. Where in the past achievement between Years 3 and 6 has been satisfactory, it is now good though the most rapid progress remains in Years 5 and 6. Current assessments show that standards this year are above average in all three subjects, with a good proportion of pupils reaching high levels in the national tests. Far more pupils have achieved the higher level in science this year because of improvements to the way the science curriculum is taught.

Pupils from Traveller backgrounds achieve well because of the excellent induction systems in place and the warm welcome they receive from other pupils. Pupils with speech, language and moderate learning difficulties also achieve well, because the teaching caters effectively for their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Through the school's very caring and spiritual ethos, pupils thrive personally and develop into mature, articulate and sensible individuals who are well prepared for the future. Spiritual, moral and social developments are outstanding. Pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong and say that bullying is very rare; they are confident that if it were to occur, it would be addressed immediately. There is very good racial and social harmony because the school emphasises the equality of, and consideration for, all. Cultural development is satisfactory; pupils' understanding of life in a multicultural society is weaker than other aspects.

Pupils have an excellent knowledge of how to stay fit, healthy and safe. They thoroughly enjoy school. Attendance is above average, although a few children have holidays with their parents during term time, which affects their progress. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the local and wider community, through their work with the church and their collections for charity.

School council members take their roles extremely seriously and are involved well in proposed changes, for example to the school dinners.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers enjoy very positive relationships with pupils, creating a calm and positive ethos for learning. Pupils feel confident to try out new things and are not afraid to make mistakes. Activities in many classes are stimulating and exciting and help pupils to develop independence in their learning. In an outstanding Year 1 literacy lesson for example, five groups worked excitedly on activities centred on a story about bears. Pupils were engrossed, finding words to rhyme with bear, writing stories independently, arranging pictures in sequence and recounting the story to each other. Pupils' phonic skills were secure and many were already operating a year in advance of their chronological age. In contrast, in some lessons, the activities provided lack interest and challenge. Pupils complete them willingly but not so enthusiastically. This affects their motivation and progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils benefit from a well-organised, interesting curriculum. Staff have worked hard in recent years to make it more relevant to pupils' needs and interests. Literacy is promoted very well within other subjects so that pupils get many opportunities to practise reading and writing. Personal 'core skills' are covered well within the wider curriculum. Consequently, pupils learn the benefits of working together for example, and taking responsibility. A wide range of visits and visitors to the school often make learning fun. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the wide range of out-of-hours activities offered by teachers, parents and outside agencies, which help them refine particular skills and learn new ones. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory and the school has rightly identified the need to develop the curriculum further to meet the needs of these pupils more closely.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has excellent strategies for taking care of pupils' emotional and personal needs. Safeguarding requirements are secure. Very good induction systems help new pupils settle in quickly and take an active part in school life. Provision for the pupils from Traveller backgrounds is extremely good, showing the school's commitment towards promoting community cohesion.

Pupils who need extra help with their learning receive good support. The systems for setting targets for pupils, and measuring their progress towards them, work very well. Marking is satisfactory but does not always give pupils sufficient guidance on how well they have met the purpose of the lesson or what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides calm and very sensitive leadership to the work of the school. Other senior leaders support her well through their work as 'key leads', taking responsibility for different aspects of the school's work, for example, the curriculum and the learning environment. As a leadership team, they present a formidable catalyst for change as they challenge one another's ideas to arrive at practical solutions to remedy areas of relative weakness. There are good analyses of standards and of pupils' progress but systems to monitor and evaluate teaching sometimes lack enough rigour to secure the necessary improvement. Governance is good. An active core participate effectively and work hard to monitor and support the school's work well.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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|---|-----|
| 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 | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |

The quality of provision

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|--|---|
| 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

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| 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 | 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

16 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Teresa's Catholic Primary School, Rochford, SS4 1RF

We really enjoyed visiting your school recently. Thank you for being so helpful and telling us all about St Teresa's. Now it is my turn to write and tell you what we found out.

Yours is a good school. Adults look after you extremely carefully so you feel really safe and are able to concentrate well on your learning. The younger children in Reception quickly settle in and enjoy all the exciting activities that are organised for them. You make good progress with your work because the teaching is good and motivates you to work hard. The adults in charge have some good ideas about how to make things even better for you.

One thing that really impressed us was the way in which you work together and help each other. You all behave exceptionally well and really respect one another's ideas and values. New pupils told us that they received a warm welcome when they arrived, which helped them to feel part of the school. We were pleased to learn you know what to do if bullying happens although you say this is rare. You all know how to keep healthy and many of you take part in sports clubs after school, which is great. Most of you attend regularly but a few pupils take holidays during term time, which means they miss important parts of their education.

We are pleased that you enjoy lessons so much. Occasionally a few of you find them too easy and we have asked your teachers to make sure that the work they set is interesting and challenging enough for all of you.

I know you will want to play your part in helping the school to improve by working hard in lessons and continuing to share your ideas and opinions with your teachers.

Thank you again.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs M Summers Lead inspector