

# St John's Cathedral Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	116385
<b>Local Authority</b>	Portsmouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	312286
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Caroline Bolton HMI

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	249
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Commodore P Swan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss C M Hobbs
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 June 2004
<b>School address</b>	Cottage View Landport Portsmouth PO1 1PX
<b>Telephone number</b>	02392 821055
<b>Fax number</b>	02392 815065

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St John's Cathedral Catholic Primary School is located in the heart of the city of Portsmouth. Its pupils come from a range of backgrounds but there are significant levels of disadvantage in the communities from which it draws most of its intake. The school is similar in size to the average for primary schools nationally. The proportion of its pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than average, as is the percentage from minority ethnic groups. Overall, the school has a higher than average percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most of these pupils have either moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional or social difficulties.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Pupils' achievement is outstanding; they enter the school with attainment below the expectation for their age yet, for the last four years, those leaving at the end of Key Stage 2 have achieved standards above national averages. Their progress has been significantly better than national levels, given their starting points and the context in which the school is working. The pupils' personal development is also outstanding. Their behaviour and attitudes are excellent and they spoke eagerly about their enjoyment of learning and of the broad range of opportunities available to them. Pupils feel very confident that the school cares for their safety and well-being. They are extremely supportive of each other, listening carefully to different views, as well as growing in confidence to put forward their own. Their moral development is particularly strong and is evident from the early stages of their time in the school.

Teaching and learning are good overall and some is outstanding. The curriculum and the care, guidance and support provided for pupils are also outstanding and contribute to an ethos of care for individuals and to an atmosphere in which learning is encouraged. The headteacher and other leaders adopt a clear focus upon raising achievement, and the outcomes for pupils over recent years show how successful this approach has been. There is a strong and appropriate focus in each key stage upon raising standards in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The staff have high aspirations for the pupils and adopt a strong focus on building their learning skills and confidence. Small group teaching is usually very effective in raising the attainment of pupils of all abilities. However, the quality of independent group work is not wholly consistent across the school and occasionally activities are not matched closely enough to pupils' needs. The school has beneficial partnerships with other schools and organisations, including the city's university. Staff are proactive in seeking to involve parents in their children's learning. Among the many parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's pre-inspection questionnaire, the great majority were very positive in their views of the school.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. Managers evaluate carefully and accurately the work of the school, which has made good progress since it was last inspected. Governors are active in the school and discharge their responsibilities well. Most statutory requirements are fully met although further work is needed to ensure that the results of the school's monitoring of its policy on disability are communicated to parents. Much has been achieved in promoting high achievement and in engaging pupils in their learning. Together with the strengths in the leadership and management of the school, this is clear evidence of its excellent capacity to continue to improve.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage enables the children to make good progress, having joined the school with attainment generally below that expected nationally. Planning is carefully linked to the required areas of learning within the Foundation Stage curriculum and assessment records for each pupil are regularly updated. Milestones in the children's progress are carefully logged as they are achieved, although some assessment records give limited information about children's progress in physical development. The staff have a clear focus in their teaching and assessment upon speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy and they provide a firm foundation for the systematic development of these essential skills as pupils move through the school. However,

this emphasis is by no means to the exclusion of other areas of learning. Children have ample opportunities to develop their creative, personal, social and physical skills and they are encouraged from the beginning to reflect on right and wrong behaviour. Relationships between children and adults are very positive. Children feel secure and enjoy their activities. The learning spaces are well presented, with inviting areas for imaginative play and encouragement for children to understand the importance of healthy lifestyles.

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

- Ensure that where pupils are engaged in group work, the learning expected is consistently well matched to their needs and levels of attainment.
- Ensure that statutory requirements are met in relation to the school's disability policy and that its principles are used to develop further the inclusive nature of the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' progress over time is outstanding. Their attainment on entry to the school is below that expected for their age and by the end of Key Stage 1, it is in line with national levels. For the last four years, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have been above the national average. The statutory test results for this period represent progress which has been significantly above average, taking account of the pupils' starting points and the context in which the school is operating. Through the curriculum and through the planning of teaching and learning, the staff have adopted a clear focus on raising attainment in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and the pupils' achievement has been a testament to their success in this work. The year group of pupils who took the Key Stage 2 tests in 2007 had made particularly strong progress in English and almost all left the school having reached or exceeded standards in English and mathematics expected for their age.

In most lessons, pupils' progress is at least good and at times outstanding. Their confidence and the range of their learning skills increase as they move through the school. By the end of Key Stage 2, they develop their understanding by taking part readily in question and answer sessions and exploration of their ideas through discussion. The staff make effective use of assessment and discussions with individual pupils to track their progress, intervening with additional support for those in danger of falling behind. As a result, progress is at least good among all groups of pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language. Those who have learning or behavioural, emotional or social difficulties are well supported and they make good progress.

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

### **Grade: 1**

The personal development and well-being of pupils are outstanding. Behaviour in lessons, corridors and in the playground is consistently of a very high quality. The quality of relationships between children and adults is exemplary. Pupils are supportive of each other in lessons and consider politely and thoughtfully the views of others. Pupils say that they greatly enjoy their learning. They speak confidently about their own safety and the ease with which they would turn to their peer group or adults if they were worried. They show a high level of awareness and knowledge of other cultures and they develop strong moral understanding, which is evident when they engage in classroom discussion. This was seen as early as the Foundation Stage,

where very young children were reflecting very thoughtfully on the reasons why a character in a well-known story behaved badly and what might have been done to make him think differently.

Pupils' attendance is close to the national average. The proportion of unauthorised absence is well below average and the progress that has been made in raising attendance is linked to the school's clear strategies and determined approach. The pupils are aware of what is needed for a healthy life-style and understand well the importance of healthy eating.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good overall and some is outstanding. Provision in Year 6 is particularly strong. Time is well used and lessons usually move along at a brisk pace. Staff have high expectations of the pupils' behaviour and achievement and constantly seek to build their confidence and raise their aspirations. Work is well planned and organised to develop systematically a good range of learning skills. There are examples of highly effective use of speaking and listening in the classroom. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are able to further their learning through questioning, discussion and independent enquiry. Their progress is very carefully tracked and those in danger of underachieving are identified and supported in line with their needs and attainment levels.

Small group teaching is effective in boosting the progress of pupils at the middle levels of attainment, as well as those with learning difficulties. As in other aspects of the school's work, there is a strong focus in the programme of additional support on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy. The displays of pupils' work in classrooms are well maintained and provide very helpful resources for learning. Occasionally, activities in group work are not consistently well matched to pupils' needs; they are either too hard or lack sufficient challenge and limit pupils' progress.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

Schemes of work are reviewed annually to ensure that they meet very well the needs of the pupils currently in each year group. The provision is effective in supporting those in danger of falling behind. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the opportunities available to them, within the classroom and in the broad range of activities out of school. The school makes effective use of the rich array of resources associated with the naval history of Portsmouth, and pupils spoke very positively about their vivid experiences during these visits. They also spoke about their enjoyment in a week spent on a farm. Such visits promote both their personal and academic development. Teachers make helpful links between different curricular areas, enabling pupils to transfer their skills and understanding from one subject to another. Planning focuses particularly on the development of basic skills in literacy and numeracy. This focus is a significant factor in the high levels of achievement evident in the Key Stage 2 tests. The staff ensure that curricular planning is flexible enough to meet the needs of specific groups of pupils including those who have learning difficulties, the most able pupils and those who are at an early stage of learning English.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

The school staff share an understanding of the central importance of care, guidance and support in helping to improve outcomes for pupils. As well as implementing appropriate policies and procedures, the school goes much further and underpins the policies with highly effective practice to support pupils. The behaviour policy is reviewed each autumn and translated into rules agreed by pupils for their own classrooms. They are well aware of the very high standards expected and of the system of sanctions and rewards that helps to promote these standards. Pupils who arrive from other schools settle well and enjoy the calm atmosphere and the opportunities available within the excellent curriculum.

Attendance and punctuality are promoted with determination. The headteacher visits pupils' homes on occasions to discuss problems. Pupils with specific needs are supported well by personalised learning programmes, with the help of support staff and favourable adult to pupil ratios. Progress is carefully monitored and there is active engagement of pupils and parents in meeting targets. Support from external agencies is successfully arranged as necessary. The school works very effectively in promoting economic well-being, for example through its partnership with Portsmouth University.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The headteacher adopts an uncompromising focus on raising pupils' achievement and their aspirations for their future lives. She has a clear vision for the direction of the school, in which she is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher and the other managers. Targets for achievement are suitably ambitious but realistic in the light of secure assessment information. Some subject managers are relatively inexperienced but close monitoring and support enable them to grow in confidence as their management skills develop. Overall, the staff work with a shared sense of purpose and understanding of the priorities in the school development plan, which is based upon careful evaluation of the school's performance.

Systems for monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school are strong and draw upon secure evidence. The school's evaluation of its progress is accurate, although it recognises that there is more detailed analysis of its many strengths than of its areas for further development.

The governing body is effective and generally well informed about the school's progress through an appropriate range of channels. Governors are actively involved in the school and in evaluation of its work.

The school works closely with partner organisations in the local area. The focus is consistently upon enriching the children's experience and encouraging them to be ambitious for the future. Staff work hard to engage parents and carers in their children's learning. The great majority of parents were wholly positive about the school but a small minority felt that it should take more account of their views.

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues from its last inspection. Given the high calibre and determination of its leadership, together with their proven record of raising achievement, the school has an excellent capacity to continue to improve.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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	1
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	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	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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<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>	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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

31 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St John's Cathedral Catholic Primary School, Portsmouth, PO1 1PX

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school and for talking to us about your lessons and all the other things you do in school. I would like to tell you about what we found about your school and some of the things we have written in our report.

Many of you told us that yours is an excellent school and how much you enjoy being there. We agree with you and we believe you are right to be proud of it. The headteacher and all the staff work very hard to provide you with good lessons and you told us that they care for you very well indeed. You have many exciting activities outside the classroom and you told us how much you enjoy the very interesting visits which your teachers organise. We were very impressed by your behaviour, by how politely you speak to everyone and by how carefully you listen in lessons. Because of all the hard work which you and your teachers do, you make excellent progress during your time in the school.

This is why we have written in our report that your school is outstanding. This is the highest grade that inspectors can give to schools. The headteacher and the staff are always looking for ways in which they can make the school even better than it is and there are two things in particular which we are asking them to do. The first is to make sure that when you are working in groups in your classrooms, you all have things to do which you can finish without the teachers' help but which are not too easy for you. The second is for the school to let your parents know how well it does in making sure that parents, staff and pupils who have disabilities are able to take a full part in school life.

We wish you all the very best for the future and thank you again for helping us while we were in your school.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Bolton

Her Majesty's Inspector