

Springhill Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 116396 |
| Local Authority | Southampton |
| Inspection number | 312292 |
| Inspection date | 13 November 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | David Marshall |

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 | 630 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr P Jones |
| Headteacher | Mrs P A Phelan |
| Date of previous school inspection | 6 May 2003 |
| School address | Milton Road Southampton SO15 2HW |
| Telephone number | 023 80333954 |
| Fax number | 023 80399971 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching, particularly for writing and music, and the impact of, and provision for, the increasing number of pupils with English as an additional language. In addition, evidence was gathered from discussions and school documentation to evaluate the quality of leadership and management and the school's arrangements for the pupils' care, guidance and support. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included in this report.

Description of the school

Springhill is a very popular, much larger than average, voluntary aided school. As a Catholic school, they have a wide catchment area, but take mainly from inner city Southampton. The social and economic background of pupils is mixed and changing including, for example, an above average, and increasing, number of pupils with English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly in line with the national average.

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: 1

Springhill provides an outstanding education for its pupils. Through the whole staff, the school provides a warm, caring environment where the excellent welfare for each pupil ensures their outstanding academic and personal development. As one parent said, 'Springhill School offers everything I would expect and hope for, for my child's education. He is fully supported with the excellent level of teaching he receives.'

Inspection evidence fully endorses the parents' overwhelmingly positive views of the school and, in particular, the quality of teaching. Teachers assess pupils' progress exceptionally well and make excellent use of this information when planning future work. This helps them to ensure that lessons are pitched at the right levels and that all pupils can succeed. Tasks engage pupils' interest and inspire them to learn. A superb example was an outstanding lesson in Year 2 where drama was used exceptionally well to motivate and enhance pupils' writing. Relationships are strong and pupils work productively as a result. In lessons, expectations are high, the pace is brisk and pupils know what they are expected to learn. The school has placed a particular emphasis on pupils' writing in the last three years. The outstanding results are all around the school in the stunning displays of pupils' written work. In the provisional 2007 national test results for pupils in Year 6, it is not surprising to find that in English the school's results put the pupils in the top ten per cent of all schools nationally. These results were surpassed in mathematics where the school was in the top two per cent. Individual improvement targets and outstanding support for pupils of all abilities consistently raise pupils' levels of achievement. This excellent support and progress is enabled by the careful use of the outstanding tracking systems developed and refined by the office manager. It is also significant that the pupils themselves know their own targets and how best they can improve to reach them. The exceptional planning means that the goals of developing pupils' personal qualities of enquiry, adaptability and thoughtfulness are paramount in every lesson. It was remarkable to hear Year 6 pupils discussing so confidently the use of personification to enhance their stories in an outstanding English lesson.

The support staff make a strong contribution to this high quality of learning, whether working with individuals or small groups. They form excellent relationships, keep pupils on task and, in particular, help pupils who have difficulty concentrating. Their support has also been vital in the case of the increasing number of pupils coming to the school with English as an additional language (EAL). The EAL coordinator's knowledge of the pupils is encyclopaedic and she has designed her own assessment, tracking and recording systems that enable every pupil to make excellent progress. As one father wrote, 'We are very impressed about our daughter's progress as a foreign person. School management has done all the best to help her settle down. She is now making good progress in learning English, which is not her first language. Well done.'

The outstanding start children make in the Reception classes is consistently built on throughout the school and, as a result, pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent. They develop a detailed understanding of safety and how to make healthy choices. Pupils also make an exceptional contribution to the school and wider community. The School Council are justifiably proud of the input they have made to changes both inside and outside the school. The governing body has already acknowledged their desire for further attention to be paid to improve the outside areas such as the school field, and is right to do so. Attendance is above average, as pupils enjoy all their time at school. As one parent observed, 'The fact that my son couldn't wait to go back to school after the summer holidays is testament to just how good the school

is! Pupils' behaviour, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. These qualities, together with their outstanding skills in English, mathematics and science prepare them very well for the next stage in their learning. Relationships with parents are excellent and the staff have a strong commitment to partnership with them. This contributes very well to the outstanding pastoral care the school shows for its pupils.

The curriculum is very well adapted to suit all pupils' needs and learning styles. It is this zealous attention to detail regarding what each pupil wants and needs that shows the school's outstanding capacity to continue to improve. Not only have standards in English, mathematics and science risen consistently across the school in the last three years, but the pupils have been given excellent opportunities in all other subjects. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in all subjects is exceptional. The animations that Year 6 produced to show their understanding of different topics, such as Henry VIII and his wives, were astonishingly good. The achievements in music are also exceptional. The pupils in a Year 5 lesson observed were working at levels well above those expected for their age. This reflects the very high expectations and enthusiasm of the outstanding music teacher.

Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding and this has a considerable impact on pupils' excellent progress. Teamwork is of the highest quality and everyone plays a valuable part in moving the school forward. The very experienced headteacher's leadership is outstanding. All staff, in the highly committed curriculum teams, follow her exceptional lead and are excellent role models in their own right. Governors have an excellent understanding of their strategic role in the school's development and have very good systems for checking on its effectiveness and holding the leaders to account. As a result, they have very clear understanding of what is working well, what can improve and how it can be achieved. Most parents appreciate the high quality of the school's leadership and confirm that the school takes good account of their views. As one said, 'The school promotes a real family environment and any issues are dealt with immediately and time is taken to ensure an outcome is communicated.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make an excellent start to their education in the Reception classes. It is testament to the huge level of commitment and care shown by the Foundation Stage manager and her staff that all children settle into the school exceptionally well despite coming in from 30 different nurseries. One parent wrote, 'The transition from pre-school to reception has been very smooth. I am impressed at how quickly she has settled down.' The overall use of PDR, 'Plan, Do, Review', in the Reception classes gives the children a real sense of determining their own way forward and guarantees their full involvement in all activities. Children's attainment on entry is broadly in line with expectations for their age. They make rapid progress and achieve exceptionally well, especially in writing and in linking sounds and letters. Adults have high expectations, provide very clear routines and enable children to build strong, positive relationships. The enthusiasm and enjoyment of the children as they discussed animatedly part of the Goldilocks story, was a good indication of how successful the organisation is. The rooms available are stimulating and resources are used well as children move from one to another. The well resourced outside areas provide the same exciting level of challenge and stimulation, especially for the more capable children. A very calm and purposeful atmosphere is created where the children are already making excellent progress. Staff have already got to know the children very well. They make a careful note of all responses and feedback. The information collected about children is used particularly well to ensure that the least able and most vulnerable settle well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Although there are no major issues for improvement, the school agrees that it should improve the quality of some of the outside areas, such as the school field.

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? | 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 | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 1 |
| The standards ¹ 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 | 1 |

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 | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |

The quality of provision

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|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 1 |
| 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 |

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? | 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 | 1 |
| 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

23 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Springhill Catholic Primary School, Southampton, SO15 2HW

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school. I enjoyed my time with you and would now like to tell you what I found out about your school. I agree with what some of you told me - Springhill is an excellent school.

I think you make outstanding progress and really try hard at all times. I was very impressed that you knew what to do to make your work even better. I saw that you know you are especially lucky to have so many different activities both during and after school. I also saw how keen you are to take part and how well you behave. Many of you told me how much you enjoy being at school, and how proud you are of what you can do. I am sure that you will continue to try hard so your school can be the fun place that you like and where you can all learn.

Your teachers and support staff work hard to help you to do as well as you can. I agree with your School Council and I have asked them to look again at the outside areas such as the school field and see if they can be made even better.

Finally, I would like to thank you once again for all your help. I wish you well in the future.

With kind regards

David Marshall

Lead inspector