

# St John Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117487
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	312631
<b>Inspection date</b>	1 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Geof Timms

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	217
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr James Hough
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Alex Hanou
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 July 2003
<b>School address</b>	Providence Way Baldock Hertfordshire SG7 6TT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 892478
<b>Fax number</b>	01462 892683

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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 following issues:

- The picture of achievement especially that of the more able boys, those with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language.
- The impact of the school's self-evaluation.
- The care and academic guidance offered to pupils.

The inspector gathered evidence from observations of lessons, samples of pupils' work, discussions with pupils, staff and the chair of the governors, and from the parents' questionnaires. The main documents used by the school in monitoring and strategic planning were examined. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as provided in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This is a broadly average-sized primary school serving the Catholic community in Baldock and the surrounding area. A below average proportion of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. There are few pupils from minority ethnic groups. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with a small number from mixed, Asian or Black backgrounds. Very few have English as an additional language. The proportion of the pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. The majority of the pupils are from quite favourable socio-economic backgrounds. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with that expected.

The school has recently achieved a Healthy School Award.

## 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 provides pupils with an effective start to their education. Above all, it is a very caring school and staff strive hard to achieve the best for all pupils, by offering support and setting challenging targets. Parents are rightly very pleased with the school and their views are reflected by one who wrote, 'I wouldn't send my children anywhere else!'

The parents particularly praise the teaching and support staff. This is supported by inspection evidence. Teaching is good. Pupils make progress which is at least good throughout the school. In some lessons, where teaching is outstanding, pupils make excellent progress. Some groups, especially those who join the school late or who have disrupted family circumstances, make excellent progress. Investigation of the progress of those with specific learning difficulties and those with emotional and behavioural needs shows that they make good progress, due to the excellent support and care provided for them. When the school recognises a group of pupils is not making the progress they should, this is quickly investigated and addressed by the senior management team. This has happened, for example, with the achievement of more able boys in writing, and improvements are already evident in their work.

Current standards in Year 6, and those achieved in the national tests in 2007, are above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Pupils achieve well. Their standards are rising. This is the result of outstanding leadership by the headteacher. She has built a high quality, very knowledgeable team of leaders, both as senior managers and subject leaders. Their work has resulted in excellent progress since the last inspection when a number of serious issues needed to be addressed. Pupils' behaviour is better managed, and their learning is much better evaluated to check the success of teaching and the improvement of numeracy skills.

The governing body has had a good impact on these improvements. They are effective in holding the school to account. A particular strength has been the willingness of the school to build an excellent range of links with a wide variety of agencies and other bodies outside the school. These include local schools, the church, the local authority and, especially, providers of opportunities for pupils who find learning difficult or have particular gifts and talents. High quality improvements have resulted in better provision and show that the school has an outstanding capacity to improve. This is also evident in more recent changes that are yet to impact on standards. These include the use of more detailed tracking of pupils' progress.

The curriculum is good. Recent improvements include provision of a modern foreign language and the use of outside expertise for coaching in music and sports. The school has also introduced changes to the planning and delivery of literacy and numeracy. These have not yet been reviewed to assess whether they are having sufficient impact on raising standards. The school recognises that its curricular planning does not make sufficient links between subjects to help pupils to use skills they have learned in enough different ways.

The pupils' personal development is outstanding as a result of the school's very caring and supportive ethos. This is clear in comments from parents who have received support from the staff through difficult personal experiences. The school's Christian ethos clearly shines through all of its work but this does not stop the pupils learning about other faiths and cultures, and they talk very positively about the opportunity they have to help a school in Africa. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and is evident in their very positive attitudes towards learning, their outstanding behaviour, and the high levels of attendance. They readily take responsibility for helping each other. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of

how to keep themselves healthy and safe, including while using computers and the Internet. They have a high level of confidence in the adults in the school and talk willingly about the help and support they receive, 'Teachers always help you and try to make lessons fun,' one said.

The school provides excellent pastoral care for pupils. The requirements for checking on adults who work with children are fully met, and health and safety and child protection procedures are fully in place. A minority of parents feels that particular aspects of communication could be improved, including informing them on some medical matters, but the school has appropriate guidelines that are usually followed correctly. Academic guidance and support for pupils have improved greatly recently. The marking of their work is very effective in helping pupils to understand what they have done well and what to do to improve. Individual and challenging targets are set for pupils. They are aware of these and how they can be achieved, helping to promote their learning and good progress. Pupils talk enthusiastically about how they learn to assess their own work and that of their friends. This enables them to learn more and to share knowledge and skills. The school's detailed system for tracking pupils' progress helps staff to highlight any underachievement and to address this quickly and effectively.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

The provision for the children in the Nursery and Reception classes is good, and has been reflected in a recent quality award given by the local authority. The adults work well together to plan a good range of appropriate activities that give children good opportunities to take part in teacher-led or self-selected tasks. Children quickly settle into routines and expectations of their behaviour and developing social skills are high. Their progress is assessed and tracked in detail by staff who know individual children well. This information is used when planning to ensure that tasks are well matched to childrens' needs. The good progress of the children ensures that most achieve the expected levels by the time they start Year 1. There is a good outdoor area, which the school plans to develop further. Currently there are times when this is not used fully.

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

- Review recent changes in the planning of literacy and numeracy to highlight improvements and assess areas needing development, to raise standards further.
- Develop a clear plan to make better links between subjects and develop more creativity across the curriculum.

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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?	1
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 <sup>1</sup> 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	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	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	2

### 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

<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	2
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	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**

2 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St John Roman Catholic Primary School, Baldock, Hertfordshire, SG7 6TT

Thank you for the way you welcomed me to your school recently and the help you gave me in finding out about how good it is. I enjoyed watching you at work and play, and also the instruments in assembly. Like you, I was very impressed with Michael's piano playing!

I think St John's is a good school, with some outstanding features. The best things about it are the way the staff both care for you and also challenge you to improve your work and reach the targets they give you. The children I met from the school council told me how much you enjoy being at school and taking part in lessons. You help the teachers because you behave so well in lessons and because you are very enthusiastic about your work. Your parents help by making sure you do not miss much time at school. You learn many new things and are happy to be given responsibilities. I know the older ones really enjoy helping the younger ones.

The school is exceedingly well led and managed by Ms Hanou and her senior staff. All of the adults work very hard to provide you with a good education. To help your school become even better I have asked the teachers to judge how well recent changes to literacy and numeracy lessons have helped you learn, and to make better links between subjects so you get the chance to use your skills in different ways.

Thank you again for your help. Enjoy your time at St John's and keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms

Lead inspector