

St Teresa's Catholic Primary School, Ashford

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118760
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313077
Inspection date	18 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Wendy Forbes

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	195
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Carter
Headteacher	John Philpott
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Quantock Drive Ashford TN24 8QN
Telephone number	01233 622797
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and focused in particular on the following points.

The rate of progress of all learners, particularly high attainers at Key Stage 1.

The effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum in meeting the needs of higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 1 and in improving writing across the whole school.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in raising standards in writing.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspectors 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 where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Teresa's is a popular, oversubscribed school that includes Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision for pupils in the Reception class. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. There are an average number of pupils from minority ethnic groups but the vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. Their difficulties include behavioural and speech and language problems as well as specific learning difficulties. The school enjoys strong links with the local church as well as the local community. It has received a number of awards including Activemark, Primary Languages (silver), ECO (bronze) and Travel Plan (platinum) and has reached the standard required for ICT Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Teresa's provides a good standard of education for its pupils because it is well led and managed, and teaching and the curriculum are good. Parents express positive views about the school and rightly say that it is a 'happy school, where children are valued, work hard and achieve well'. The school is well supported by the parent body who invest a great deal of time and effort in helping the school to improve its facilities as seen in the improvements since the last inspection to the outdoor play areas.

When children arrive in school the majority have the skills expected for their age. They achieve well throughout the EYFS and most children are making good progress from their starting points. With the exception of writing, standards in Year 2 have remained just above the national average over time and although they have varied in recent years, due largely to differences in the make-up of each year group, they continue to improve. However, leaders and managers are not complacent and have rightly identified the need to continue to raise standards, particularly in writing at Key Stage 1, which up until 2008 had fallen over time. Although recent data and inspection evidence show that standards in writing have risen, they remain below those in reading as the strategies put in place to secure improvement have yet to be fully effective. The current performance of Year 2 pupils indicates that all, including high attainers, are making good progress towards their targets. This is due largely to the good quality teaching and the curriculum which meets pupils' needs. Pupils continue to achieve well between Years 3 and 6 and reach well above average standards in national tests in Year 6. This is especially the case for high attainers in English. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of the support they receive.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Good relationships are characterised by courtesy, mutual respect and good behaviour. Pupils say they feel safe and secure and are developing an awareness of what they need to do to ensure healthy lifestyles. They know where to turn to if they are experiencing problems and confidently say, 'Teachers sort out our problems.' Attendance is good. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is built on respect for other people's values and feelings. There is an effective school council whose members take their role seriously ensuring that pupils have a voice in school. Pupils enjoy the responsibility the school gives them and are proud to be buddies and help younger children enjoy playtime, as well as enjoying the opportunities to participate in recycling projects and charity fund raising. Pupils are prepared well for the future because they have good basic skills, particularly in information and communication technology (ICT).

Children have positive attitudes to their learning and say they enjoy school. Relationships are good and pupils are keen to learn. Pupils say, 'We have good lessons.....our teachers work us hard.' These comments are reflections of the consistently good teaching pupils receive. In the best, well-paced lessons, learning is made interesting because teachers are skilled at asking questions which make pupils think. Good work of a high standard was observed in one Year 5 class where pupils worked hard to understand the meaning of a poetry text. In another good lesson seen in Year 1, pupils were actively engaged in challenging number activities.

The curriculum is good with strong provision in ICT, as well as in literacy and numeracy across a range of subjects, which is raising standards by the end of Year 6. However, although the curriculum has provided a good framework to help improve attainment, there are not yet sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills, and standards in writing have

yet to match those attained in reading and mathematics. The good curriculum has a positive impact on learning and gives pupils many opportunities to participate in school life through a good range of extra-curricular clubs enhanced by a wide variety of enrichment activities such as African drumming, dance and music, themed history days, French and swimming. Many links have been established with local secondary schools creating opportunities for the pupils to enjoy extended activities in sport, science and music.

The provision for care, guidance and support is satisfactory. All safeguarding requirements are met. Although the school provides sound structures for caring for pupils, and has well established target-setting, marking and assessment systems, practice is not yet consistent across the whole school. As a result not all pupils have a clear enough understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. Where the tracking and assessment systems are most effective, for example in Years 5 and 6 and for pupils who need help, the appropriate level of support is provided and as a result good progress is made. The school makes good use of its many good links with outside services, neighbouring schools, the local church as well as community groups to enhance the curriculum and to provide specialised support and advice for particular groups of pupils.

The headteacher provides good leadership and management and is well supported by an experienced senior leadership team whose good leadership skills ensure that the school is sharply focused on areas for school improvement, such as raising standards in writing across the whole school. The headteacher and his deputy have formed an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school which has ensured that self-evaluation is good. Performance is monitored effectively and improvements are implemented. Subject leaders are provided with opportunities to develop their individual subject areas and regularly review policies and curriculum to ensure balance and quality. Governors provide good support for the school, as both a critical friend and in their strategic role by monitoring provision, as well as holding the school to account. The school is developing satisfactory provision for global and cultural development within its community cohesion policy, and has good connections with the local community. Nonetheless, there still remains scope for improving this aspect of the school's work. Good leadership and management and a strong team ethos among staff, coupled with well-focused evaluation and planning, have led to continuing good improvements in pupils' achievement where standards in English and mathematics are well above the national average by the end of Year 6. This demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Reception class is a fun place to be with lots of practical hands-on activities where children are nurtured, play together happily and develop a love of learning. Parents commented about how pleased they were with the way their children settled into Reception and the progress they are making, although a few with later admissions in the school year would appreciate the opportunity to start in September. The team is well led by the coordinator who plans learning well, matching activities to the needs of most pupils. The balance of adult-directed and child-initiated activities has improved since the last inspection. The school is working hard to ensure that the good range of indoor curriculum complements the outdoor learning areas and activities. Staff know the children well and make sure that they get the right level of support to help them develop independence and also to feel secure. The school makes good use of assessment information to target particular aspects in need of improvement such as speech and language. The good curriculum and good quality teaching mean that the current cohort

of pupils are making good progress, particularly in numeracy. By the end of the EYFS, most pupils are working within the early learning goals.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress made in writing so that standards are as good as those in reading and provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum.
- Improve the quality and consistency of marking, target-setting and assessment so that pupils have a clearer view of how well they are doing and what they need to do 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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	3

Leadership and management

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

19 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Teresa's Catholic Primary School, Ashford TN24 8QN

Thank you for making us feel so welcome in your school when we visited it recently. We really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and looking at your work. We were very impressed with how hard you work and what a happy place your school is.

You go to a good school where most of you make good progress. Your headteacher and staff really care about you, and provide lots of interesting extra activities for you, such as themed history days, French, music and ICT which all help to make learning fun.

You told us you enjoy school and work hard to do your best. You get on well with each other and have good attitudes to both work and play. You have a really good understanding of how to stay safe and are working hard to adopt a healthy lifestyle. You work hard to help others to have a happy time at school, particularly older children who give up their playtimes to organise play activities for younger pupils. We think the quality of teaching you get is good.

We feel that there are some things that your school could do better. This is because not all pupils are achieving their personal best in writing and not all pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work.

These are to:

- improve the progress you make in writing so that it is as good as your reading, and to have more time to practise your writing in lots of other subjects as well as English
- improve the quality of marking and assessment so that pupils have a clearer view of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. I hope all of you will continue to do all you can to make sure your school continues to improve and that you achieve the best possible results. Your good behaviour and attitudes will help your teachers work on the things they need to do.

Best wishes for the future.

Wendy Forbes Lead inspector