

# St Bartholomew's Catholic Primary School, Swanley

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118860
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	313123
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Terry Elston

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	326
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Terry Austin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kevin McPartland
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 May 2005
<b>School address</b>	Sycamore Drive Swanley BR8 7AY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01322 663119
<b>Fax number</b>	01322 664496

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

The impact of measures taken by the school's leadership to raise standards, particularly in science.

The extent to which the teaching and curriculum planning get the best out of more able pupils.

How well the school sets challenging targets for pupils and whether they know what they need to do to improve.

The inspector gathered evidence from observations of lessons, discussions with pupils, governors and staff, tracking pupils' progress, analysis of attendance and gaining the views of parents. 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 given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This average sized school admits pupils from a wide range of ethnic and religious backgrounds. A few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to most schools. Children's attainment on entry is typical of their ages.

## 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 where pupils flourish in all aspects of their development because of the school's high expectations of their attainment and behaviour. The impact of the school's unwavering focus on pupils' spiritual development is clear in the way they learn to think deeply about issues and wonder at the world around them. For example, one pupil, when asked to think of a spiritual moment in her life, wrote, 'It was when my brother was born and he just reached out and touched me'. Pupils behave impeccably because that is what is expected of them. In lessons you can hear a pin drop when the teacher is talking. In the playground pupils play happily and take good care of each other. They are eager to take responsibility and the school council has helped make important improvements in the play facilities outside.

Pupils are adamant that the best thing about school is their teachers. They like the way teachers make lessons fun and feel that they are 'firm but fair' in the way they treat them. Teachers make very good use of the interactive whiteboards to show pupils how to compare fractions in mathematics or link sentences together in English. Typically, lessons move at a fast pace and this maintains pupils' interest and enthusiasm for learning. Teachers' planning is thorough, but in some lessons the more able pupils are not challenged enough and this prevents them making the most of their talents. Question and answer sessions work well because teachers give all pupils the confidence to contribute. Teaching assistants are an important part of the team and work very closely with teachers to support pupils who need extra help.

Not surprisingly, pupils make rapid progress. They build well on the good start they get in the Reception classes and by Year 2 their standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. They continue to thrive in the junior classes and by Year 6 their standards are above average overall, and continue the upward trend of recent years. Standards are very high in English, above average in mathematics and slightly above in science. In Year 6, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in science is not as high as it could be, and the school rightly has this as a main priority for improvement. Pupils excel in reading because of the excellent teaching of word building skills and the way teachers give them a love of books.

A key factor in pupils' love of school and their good progress is the well planned curriculum. While it has a strong focus on basic literacy and numeracy skills, it also links subjects such as literacy, history, geography and art and design, which helps bring topics to life. The outstanding topic on Africa is an example of how this approach can lead to high standards in a range of subjects. The curriculum includes valuable work on how to stay safe and live healthy lives, and pupils speak with authority on the best foods to eat, the importance of regular exercise and the dangers of smoking. A wide range of visits, visitors and clubs after school adds extra interest to the curriculum.

Parents think the world of the school and the way it cares for their children so well. They speak very highly of the 'fantastic family ethos' and say how well it prepares their children for the future. They appreciate the robust health and safety systems and know their children feel safe at school. Adults take good care of pupils who are anxious or upset, as do the 'Buddies' at playtime. The school has done much recently to improve the use of assessment to show pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do better. This works better in some classes than others, however, and not all pupils are clear about how to improve their work. The school has developed effective systems to reduce unnecessary absences from school since the last inspection, as can be seen from the much improved attendance rates.

An important reason for the school's success is the determined leadership by the headteacher. His strength lies in the way he strives for high academic standards while never losing sight of the need for pupils to develop their personal qualities. Other leaders share his vision and enthusiasm and they make an effective team committed to high standards. The leaders analyse pupils' performance in detail, and use the information very well to set the school's priorities. This has led to good improvements recently in standards in writing and science. The leaders have developed strong partnerships with other schools that provide valuable opportunities for joint staff training and the sharing of expertise. Governors are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and fully involved in improving the school. These many strengths explain why the school has made rapid progress since the last inspection and show that it is well set to improve still further.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

The provision in the Reception classes is good. Children love school because learning is fun. Parents enthuse about the way their children are prepared for school and how quickly they settle. One parent, typical of many, wrote, 'She looks forward to coming every day.' The teachers and teaching assistants make an effective team and lessons are a good balance between work, play and opportunities for pupils to explore things for themselves. As a result, children make good progress so that, by the end of the Reception, their attainments are above average in all areas of learning. The assessments of children's progress provide accurate measures of their strengths and weaknesses, but the school rightly sees the need to ensure staff are clear about children's attainment compared to those nationally. The curriculum is planned well to give children a broad range of opportunities to develop their academic skills and personal qualities. The leadership and management are effective and committed to improving the provision further.

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

- Provide more opportunities for more able pupils to make the best of their abilities in science at Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that pupils have a clear understanding 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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### 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?	2
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	2
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	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 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

<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>	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

21 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bartholomew's Catholic Primary School, Swanley, BR8 7AY

Thank you for your valuable contributions to this inspection. It was a pleasure to meet so many of you who showed such enthusiasm for your school. I enjoyed talking to some of you in the playground and at lunchtime and you told me a lot about your school. You think yours is a good school and you are right!

What I found out about your school.

- You work hard and make good progress.
- You have a really good understanding of how to keep safe and live healthy lives.
- Your teachers do a good job; they work hard to make lessons fun and help you when you find things difficult.
- You enjoy the activities planned for you and the wide range of visits and visitors that make learning interesting.
- Your behaviour is exceptionally good, both in class and around the school, and you like taking responsibility.
- The staff and governors run the school well and know how to make improvements.
- All the adults care for you well, and are always there if you need help.

What the school should do now.

- Make sure that all groups of pupils, including those who find work easy, do as well as they possibly can, and especially in mathematics and science.
- Make it clearer to you how well you are doing at school and how you could do even better. You can help by thinking more carefully about your targets when you are working.

With best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Terry Elston

**Annex B**

21 May 2008

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