

The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122039
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314202
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Gulshanbir Kayembe

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	345
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Reynolds
Headteacher	Anne Walker
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2003
School address	Kingsland Gardens Northampton NN2 7BH
Telephone number	01604 714399
Fax number	01604 714672

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school draws its pupils from a wide area of Northampton, including parts that experience significant social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is average. Although the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above. Attainment on entry is in line with what is expected nationally. The school has undergone significant changes since its last inspection. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those at the early stages of learning English, has increased. Both are now above average. Following local reorganisation, the school has changed from a lower school, catering for pupils between the ages of four and nine, to a primary for pupils aged four to eleven. Considerable building and redevelopment work has taken place to accommodate the additional two year groups. A grant-funded nursery constitutes a further change. The school now has secure staffing following a period of instability and change during reorganisation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education, enabling pupils to make satisfactory progress. Provision in the Foundation Stage is also satisfactory. The Catholic nature of the school makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being, which are good overall. The school's positive ethos promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development particularly well, inspiring them to develop caring attitudes to others.

Achievement is satisfactory throughout the school, including in the Foundation Stage. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have suffered in the past from the upheavals of reorganisation and, consequently, have not always achieved well enough. Now, with stable staffing and building work complete, progress is beginning to accelerate and is satisfactory. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to attain average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of the academic year. This is a significant improvement from last year when the attainment of pupils in Year 6 was below average. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2 and are improving. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress in reading and writing, reaching standards that are above average by the end of Year 2. In mathematics and science, they reach average standards. Across the school, standards and progress are more secure in English than in mathematics and science. While pupils learn mathematical methods and scientific facts well, they make slower progress in developing problem-solving skills, applying their factual knowledge to new situations and developing investigative approaches to their work. This is mainly because there are too few opportunities in lessons and through the curriculum to develop these skills. Nonetheless, teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory overall. Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and secure good cooperation from them. They make clear to pupils what they are expected to learn. However, questioning does not always probe pupils' understanding enough and pace is slow at times. The more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

The curriculum, including in the Foundation Stage, provides good opportunities for pupils' personal development. They know about healthy eating and eagerly participate in sporting activities. Good pastoral care ensures pupils are, and feel, safe. Behaviour is good but, although pupils enjoy school, attendance is only satisfactory because of holidays taken during term time. Pupils make a good contribution to the community through fundraising activities and taking responsibility around the school. Given their satisfactory academic progress, preparation for their next stage in education is also satisfactory.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has worked in a focused way with staff to address the slippage in standards due to the adverse impact of reorganisation and building work on pupils' progress. She has succeeded in establishing satisfactory standards in teaching, which, together with new and robust systems for tracking pupils' progress, is leading to improved pupil progress. School self-evaluation is used effectively to identify the right priorities for development, and there is now a clear focus on raising standards in mathematics and science.

While the headteacher and assistant head monitor the day-to-day quality of teaching, other coordinators are less effectively involved in this or in using the information to drive improvements in their areas of responsibility. Nonetheless, given the improving standards and progress, the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Attainment is average by the end of Foundation Stage. Teaching is satisfactory, with some of it good. Staff establish good rapport with pupils and classrooms are well organised. However, questioning is not always used enough to promote pupils' speaking. Nonetheless, children enjoy school and make good progress in developing their social skills and learning to take turns and share.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics and science by improving pupils' problem-solving and investigative skills and confidence in applying knowledge to new situations.
- Develop teaching further through more probing questioning, and improving the pace of lessons; also increase the challenge for more able pupils.
- Improve the involvement of coordinators in checking the quality of work in their areas and the use they make of monitoring information to secure improvements.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The 2007 results of national tests for Year 6 pupils were below average, particularly in mathematics and science. For Year 2 pupils, results of national assessments were average overall but above in English. Whilst past results in Year 6 show a downward trend, the trend in Year 2 is upward. The difference is due to the greater impact of reorganisation and redevelopment on older pupils, some of whom also suffered from weak teaching. These issues have now been resolved and current progress in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory, thus reversing the downward trend. Nonetheless, there is more to do to improve progress in mathematics and science and for able pupils. Pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress in developing English. They make similar progress as others in mathematics and science. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds who are already fluent in English are often amongst the highest attainers. Sound support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures they make at least satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school is a happy and harmonious community where pupils get on well together. Positive relationships with adults ensure that pupils feel valued. They behave well and usually concentrate in lessons. Attendance is improving as a result of the school's effective actions. However, the rate remains restricted by some families taking holidays during term time.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They respect the feelings of others and have a well-developed sense of fair play. Pupils respond positively when given responsibilities, such as being school councillors or buddies for younger pupils. However, they demonstrate limited initiative and make too few decisions about their work in lessons, including in the Foundation Stage.

Pupils have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles. They are safety conscious and concerned for the welfare of others. For example, two pupils act as safety officers, keeping others well informed. Pupils' strong sense of community means they are keen fundraisers, and particularly committed to fundraising for Africa.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. They identify what they expect pupils to learn and explain tasks clearly. Consequently, pupils begin work with confidence. Some lessons are particularly well taught. In these, teachers know just when to step in to help and when to stand back to let pupils work things out for themselves. However, good teaching is not sufficiently widespread and there are some common weaknesses which limit progress. Questions are not always used effectively to probe pupils' understanding. At times the pace of learning slows because introductions are overlong or pupils given too long to complete tasks. Resources are well prepared and used to support learning.

Assessment has recently improved and teachers are clearer about the progress pupils are making, including those needing extra support to make up for lost ground. However, opportunities are missed to use assessment to inform the next steps in pupils' learning, especially for able pupils, who are sometimes given work that is too easy.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

In the Foundation Stage, all areas of learning are adequately covered, and provision for personal development is good. However, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to learn through purposeful practical activities. In Years 1 to 6, provision for English, mathematics and science is satisfactory, although there is insufficient emphasis on the development of pupils' mathematical problem-solving and scientific enquiry skills.

Opportunities for writing across the curriculum are good. Good provision for personal development continues through Years 1 to 6, and is reflected in pupils' positive attitudes and relationships.

A good range of visits and visitors enriches the curriculum and inspires pupils' interest. Year 4 pupils' enthusiasm about a visit to a Roman fort and actors role playing Romans and Celts is captured well by one who commented: 'It was brilliant and helped us to really understand what life must have been like.'

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils are well cared for and looked after but do not have enough guidance on how to improve their work. Good pastoral support makes this a happy school where pupils know staff are there to help if they need it. Good links with other professionals ensure pupils are kept safe and well. Good liaison with the nursery and local secondary schools ensures smooth transfer from one stage to another. The school has acted quickly to develop support for the increasing numbers learning English as an additional language, and this is satisfactory. New assessment systems help staff to identify more accurately and at

an earlier stage pupils needing support. Support staff are effectively used to provide this. Pupils know their individual learning targets but are less sure about how to achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has established clear and commonly understood goals that focus well on improving standards and pupils' achievement. There is a systematic approach to developing and implementing new systems to support school improvement, such as improved assessment and tracking of progress. These are helping to set challenging targets and raise standards. Regular monitoring of teaching by the headteacher and assistant head has helped to improve it, although there is room for further improvement. Other coordinators are not involved enough in checking the quality of work in their areas. Where they have monitored, mechanisms for sharing the information with all staff or using the information to guide improvement plans are not robust enough. Some coordinators have too many responsibilities. Governors provide sound oversight of the school's work. They are very supportive but somewhat over-reliant on the headteacher for information.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

We enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you for making us feel welcome and for speaking to us about your work and views about the school. The school provides you with a sound education so you make satisfactory progress during your time here. Good provision for your personal development means you develop good personal and social skills. Teaching is satisfactory and you have a sound range of learning opportunities. You are well cared for but could do with more guidance on how to improve your work. We have listed below some of the good things we found:

- You behave well and enjoy school, taking an active part in all the school has to offer.
- You have a strong sense of community and raise funds for good causes. You are particularly committed to raising funds for Africa.
- Many of you make good progress in writing, especially in Years 1 and 2.
- The school provides you with a good range of visits and visitors which you particularly enjoy.
- Your headteacher and staff are working hard to keep improving the school and standards are getting better.

The school has agreed to focus on the following things to help it improve:

- Develop your skills in problem solving and investigation work in mathematics and science.
- Make sure that you are asked more probing questions in lessons, that you do not spend too much time on tasks or listening to teachers, and that work is set at the right level for those of you who find learning quite easy.
- Involve teachers who are in charge of subjects more in improving their areas.

You can help too by continuing to work hard, making sure you attend regularly and by asking your teachers how you can make your work even better.

We wish you all well for the future.

28 November 2007



Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School, Kingsthorpe, Northampton NN2 7BH

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Gulshan Kayembe
Lead inspector