

St Philip Neri with St Bede Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122821
Local Authority	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LA
Inspection number	314414
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Geof Timms

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	427
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev P Ziomek
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Booton
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2005
School address	Rosemary Street Mansfield NG19 6AA
Telephone number	01623 489010
Fax number	01623 489018

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average for a primary school. Its Catholic nature means that it takes pupils from a wide area around north Mansfield and the surrounding villages and towns. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds; a significant proportion is from below average socio-economic circumstances, although the number claiming free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is well above average. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic minority backgrounds and a growing number have English as an additional language. The main languages spoken, other than English, are Polish and Malayalam. When children start at the school, their knowledge and skills vary widely but, overall, are broadly in line with those expected for their ages.

The school has sports awards for its provision in football and basketball, and has a Gold Activemark Award as well as Healthy Schools status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This effective school provides pupils with a good start to their education. Since the current headteacher arrived, her focus has been to raise standards and to create a deeply caring and supportive ethos with a high level of spirituality. In doing this, she has been very successful and the school provides pupils with an outstanding level of spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. This is reflected in the parents' and pupils' very positive feelings about the school. As one parent wrote, 'My child loves school life and some days she can't wait to get there!' Pupils have an outstanding understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe, and they behave well. Attitudes towards learning are very positive.

The school provides good value for money. Pupils achieve well and make good progress overall from their levels on entry to the standards reached at the end of Year 6. Progress in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 is currently satisfactory. Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is satisfactory, but staff do not always give children activities appropriate to their stages of development. Standards achieved by the end of Reception are broadly in line with those expected. Similarly, by the end of Year 2, standards over time have consistently remained at broadly average levels in reading, writing and mathematics. It is in Key Stage 2 that the greatest progress is evident and standards here are consistently above average in English, mathematics and science. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved since the last inspection and are currently in line with those expected nationally.

One of the reasons for the improving standards is the effective leadership and management. These have improved since the last inspection and have had a positive impact on provision. The senior leadership team provides good challenging role models for effective practice. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work are detailed and have had a positive impact on standards. Subject leadership is at an early stage of development, partly due to recent changes among the staff. However, the school's self-evaluation is accurate and honest. When weaknesses are identified, steps are taken to remedy them. For example, action taken over the accommodation has improved the buildings, although the school realises that the Foundation Stage outdoor area needs further work to provide children and teachers with a more interesting and exciting environment. The school has good capacity to improve.

Teaching and learning are good overall, with outstanding practice evident in some lessons. The best teaching is based on the effective relationships created between adults and pupils, and is reflected in pupils' comments about their work, and the outstanding levels of enjoyment they show throughout the school. As one pupil said, 'You can get on with the teachers as friends.' The school provides a good curriculum, a strength of which is the growing links that teachers are making between subjects and which help make pupils' learning more meaningful. The school offers a good level of both academic and personal guidance. Pupils have a growing awareness of the targets they are given to help them improve their work. However, the marking of their work is not always consistently helpful and teachers do not consistently base their lessons on a clear assessment of what their pupils already know and understand.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

A good emphasis on personal development, combined with a clear focus on early language and literacy skills, gives children a sound start to their school life. Children behave well and enjoy their learning. High quality support for children with learning difficulties and disabilities enables them to participate fully in school life. The teaching is satisfactory. It is at its most effective in the Nursery, where teamwork between teaching and support staff is good. In the Reception class, lengthy sessions on one activity sometimes slow progress, because children lack the maturity to sustain concentration. The curriculum is satisfactory, with an appropriate range of independent and adult-led activities. Free-choice activities sometimes lack purpose, however, because assessment information is not used effectively enough to plan activities that match the needs of individual children. Plans are in hand to improve the quality of outdoor learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision in the Foundation Stage by adopting a range of teaching and learning styles more appropriate to children's needs and using assessment information with greater precision to provide activities that more closely match ability.
- Ensure that all teachers make more consistently effective use of assessment in lesson planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although most start school with broadly average knowledge and skills in some areas, current children have weaker early reading, writing and mathematical skills, and knowledge and understanding of the world. They make satisfactory progress, although achievement is sometimes hampered by the lack of effective teaching methods based on individual needs, especially in the Foundation Stage. Progress in Years 1 and 2 continues at a satisfactory level and standards achieved by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics are consistently in line with those found nationally. Progress is good through Key Stage 2 and by the end of Year 6 standards are above average. In 2007, the progress pupils had made from Year 2 to Year 6 was very good, and continued an on-going rise in achievement. This is true in English, mathematics and science, although progress is still variable between classes and year groups. A good proportion of the older pupils now achieve higher levels and this reflects work the school has done to improve provision for the more able.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good overall and has some outstanding features. These are mainly reflected in their obvious enjoyment of school and very positive attitudes towards learning. Teachers agree that the pupils are often a joy to teach. The school ensures that pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles, although this is not always reflected in the snacks parents provide for them. Pupils are also very aware of how to keep themselves safe in and out of school. The good basic skills they are learning, alongside opportunities to co-operate and collaborate, are helping prepare them well for the next stage in their education, and for their future lives. Those with responsibilities, especially the school council, take them seriously and make a good contribution to the community. Pupils behave well. However,

although the school tries to encourage full attendance, too many pupils have extended absences, and this hinders their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are now good. In the best lessons, teaching is lively, interesting, and well matched to pupils' needs. Teachers make the objectives of the lessons clear and they are very well supported by teaching assistants, whose help is particularly effective for those with learning difficulties or disabilities, and for those at an early stage of speaking English. Teachers have a growing awareness of pupils' different learning styles, and the resources used and the use of practical activities reflects this. Where appropriate, they use ICT well to support their work. Where the teaching is less successful, lessons are not managed as well and some pupils' behaviour is less positive. The marking of pupils' work does not always help them understand how they can improve their work, and teachers do not make full use of a range of assessment methods and opportunities to check on learning and provide further work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum places a strong emphasis on developing secure literacy and numeracy skills. Well-planned experiences, such as World Faith Week, successfully bring the curriculum alive. ICT is now more an integral part of learning than at the last inspection. There is a good, well-structured personal, social and health education programme. High quality clubs and enrichment opportunities add greatly to pupils' enjoyment. Strong links with, for example, a local performing arts' college have a positive impact on learning. Excellent support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities enables them to make good progress. The school is now rightly focused on developing a more creative, skills-based curriculum, designed to raise standards further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care and pastoral support provided for all groups of pupils are good. The welfare and safeguarding of pupils are also good, reflecting important priorities for the school. There is good attention to pupils' health and safety, and the monitoring of attendance. Staff are committed to ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to fulfil their personal and academic potential. Academic guidance is good overall, with improving systems for assessing pupils' standards and setting them targets. However, the use of questioning to assess and support pupils in their learning, and check on their understanding, is not always a key focus in all lessons. Targets are set for literacy and numeracy, but are not consistently sharp enough across other subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership and management at the school reflect the increasingly effective teamwork. Consequently, there is an enthusiasm and commitment to improvement on the part of all staff. Expectations are high, and leadership is focused effectively on raising academic standards through increasingly challenging targets. Leaders understand the importance of enabling pupils to develop well as individuals with strong spiritual values. Senior leaders promote well the school's vision that pupils should be free to be themselves and make their own choices. Self-evaluation has identified correctly the key areas for development, including the need to improve assessment and the strategic role of subject leaders. Monitoring systems are robust and target-setting arrangements are increasingly effective, as reflected in pupils' good achievement. Governance is good because governors play a most supportive and informed role and are helpful, critical friends to the school. The governing body has done much recently to improve the school environment, and resources are managed and deployed well. There is an excellent commitment to inclusion and overcoming any barriers to learning.

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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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	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

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?	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	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

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

21 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Philip Neri with St Bede Catholic Primary School, Mansfield NG19 6AA

I am writing to thank you for the way you made us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We thought you were all very friendly and polite, and represented your school well. We were particularly impressed with the school council, who helped us learn about the things you like about your school. They were interesting to listen to, had very good ideas and were very sensible and mature, but also had a good sense of humour!

What we found out about the school agrees with the positive things you and your parents told us, about how much you enjoy being there and how you find lessons fun and interesting. We think you work very hard and by the time you leave school, you have standards above those of many schools. Your good behaviour and attitudes help the teachers and they teach you well. Mrs Booton and the staff all work very hard to help you make good progress and to be safe and well looked after in the school.

We were very impressed with how much you know about keeping yourselves healthy and safe. We also think the school is exceptionally good at helping those of you who find learning more difficult, particularly with the help of the teaching assistants. The school helps you develop excellent skills in thinking about spiritual things, about relationships with others and in learning about other cultures and faiths.

Although yours is a good school, there are two things we have asked the school to do to help make it even better:

- Make sure that the activities in the Nursery and Reception classes help all the youngest children to learn as well as they can.
- In all classes, make sure that teachers use different ways of working out what you know and can do, and help you understand what you need to do to get better.

Many thanks again for your help during our visit. Enjoy your time at St Philip Neri and keep working hard!

Yours sincerely,

Geof Timms Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)