

St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124369
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314904
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2008
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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)	157
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	25
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Mason
Headteacher	Jane Rowlands
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Claremont Road Tamworth B79 8EN
Telephone number	01827 475860

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School is smaller than average and is situated on the outskirts of the town. Numbers on roll have been increasing in recent years and pupils now come from outlying areas as well as a wider area of the town. This increase in size is partly due to a larger than usual number of pupils joining the school after the normal starting age. There have been a number of staffing problems in recent years, which has resulted in some classes being taught by temporary teachers and far more staff changes than one might expect. This has recently been resolved and the school now has permanent teachers in every class.

St Elizabeth's Pre-School operates from a classroom within the school and is managed by the school governors. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open for a morning and afternoon session daily, Monday to Friday.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Elizabeth's is a good school. It has many strengths and pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching. Disruption to staffing has resulted in variable standards over the last few years. However, renewed stability has led to an improvement in provisional results for the national tests in Year 6 for 2008 and standards are now above average. Mathematics and science have been a focus for improvement over the last year and there have been gratifying improvements in these subjects, particularly in science. The focus has now moved on to writing, where standards are not as good. For instance, pupils do not write in a sufficiently wide range of genres and they do not have enough opportunities to practise their writing skills in other subjects.

A major strength of the school is pupils' outstanding personal development. This results from very high levels of pastoral care. A parent spoke for many when they said, 'The strong Catholic ethos is very evident in the care and commitment shown by staff towards pupils and parents alike.' Each pupil and adult is treated as an individual who has something to offer. As a consequence, pupils behave extremely well, work hard and thoroughly enjoy school as they feel safe and secure. Pupils care extremely well for each other and are mindful of the needs of others in the wider world. They enjoy their lessons a great deal as the curriculum is planned well to meet their needs and engage their interest. Pupils' enjoyment is further boosted by the very good relationships that they have with their teachers. They spoke enthusiastically about how their teachers help them and are there for them when they have a problem. This care is particularly noticeable in the speed with which new pupils settle into school, particularly those who join in older classes; they quickly make friends and feel part of the school community.

Academic guidance is good, with careful records of pupils' gains in knowledge and understanding so that their progress can be tracked in detail. Targets are then set to show them the learning steps to help them reach the next level, but pupils often have too many at one time and they are not set consistently through the year.

The Pre-School and Reception class are organised well to meet the needs of these young children. Children develop confidently in a secure and stimulating environment. Their personal, social and emotional development has a high priority and children make particularly good progress in these areas.

The headteacher leads the school well and has ensured that other leaders are fully involved in future planning. Relationships with parents are excellent and parents appreciate these strong links. Rigorous checks are carried out on the effectiveness of all aspects of the school and well-planned initiatives are put in place to address areas for development. Governors offer very good levels of expertise and support and ensure that leaders are challenged effectively. Bearing in mind the progress being made and the shared desire to move forward, the school is very well placed to take that next step along the road to success.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

In both the Pre-School and the Reception class, there are good levels of interaction between all adults and children. This ensures that children develop good learning habits early and, in particular, that their speaking and listening skills are developed well. A particular strength is the care shown for all children and the adults' knowledge of their needs. This means that children's personal, social and emotional development is good. They clearly enjoy their time

and, even at this early stage of the year, are confident and enthusiastic. Planning in both classes is good and addresses the learning and welfare needs of the children well. Liaison between the two classes is developing well to share good practice. Planning includes a good range of adult-led activities and those that children choose for themselves. Planning almost always includes relevant activities for outdoor learning, though this is sometimes hampered by the lack of space and covered areas.

Both the Pre-School and Reception class are managed successfully and all adults work well together to ensure a safe and caring environment for the children. Both leaders have created stimulating learning environments with a good range of areas to appeal to the needs of these young children. Good systems for checking on children's progress have recently been implemented and these are beginning to be used well to plan the next developmental steps.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by increasing the range of genres in which pupils are expected to write and ensuring that they have more opportunities to practise their writing skills in other subjects.
- Improve the targets set for pupils for their next steps in learning so that they do not have too many at one time and they have targets set consistently through the year.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children start in the Pre-School with levels of skills and knowledge that are below those expected. They make good progress and achieve well through the school and, by the time they leave at the end of Year 6, they have reached above average standards. Standards have been variable in recent years owing to instability in staffing. However, the school now has permanent teachers in every class and standards in every age group are rising. The school has been focusing on raising standards in mathematics and science over the last year, as standards in these subjects dropped significantly in 2007. This drop has been totally reversed as a result of strategies implemented and standards in these subjects are higher than they have been for many years. Standards in science in Year 6 were particularly good, with all pupils achieving the expected Level 4 and half reaching the higher Level 5. However, standards in writing have dropped back and this is a current focus.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Excellent relationships, and adults' very high expectations, ensure that pupils have extremely positive attitudes to school, grow in confidence and are well behaved and polite. They are very proud of their school and take the many opportunities to take responsibility seriously. They work extremely well collaboratively and this is preparing them well for their future. Pupils play well together, with older pupils helping younger ones through 'Prayer Partners' and on the playground. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community. For instance, the school council is involved in decision making, particularly with regard to fund raising for global projects and those closer to home, and with improvements to the school environment. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and, as one said, 'I don't want to leave to go to my next school.' One expressed the feelings of many when they said, 'I am glad my mum and dad chose this school as I have learnt a lot and made loads of new friends.'

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They understand right from wrong and take responsibility for their own actions. They have excellent knowledge of their own religion and local culture and are very well aware of a wide range of world cultures. However, they have less awareness of the range of cultures and religions in British society. Pupils take every opportunity to eat a balanced diet and take regular exercise, through the varied lessons and out-of-school activities. They are aware of the dangers of drugs and know who to go to if they feel worried or have any concerns. Pupils are adamant that bullying is non-existent but are confident that if the occasion arose, staff would deal with it quickly and effectively.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers make learning stimulating and fun and so the pupils enjoy their lessons enormously. Activities are planned well to meet the varying needs of a range of abilities. Pupils are usually given tasks which are challenging and provide opportunities for discussion, as well as working independently or collaboratively in groups or pairs. However, there are occasions when the most able are not given sufficiently demanding work. Teaching assistants are well qualified and are deployed well throughout the school, ensuring that individuals or groups are supported well. They are skilled at making pupils think for themselves so that they achieve success. Marking is positive and often gives indications of the next steps in learning, though this is not always the case.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The lively curriculum covers all areas of learning effectively and stimulates the pupils' enthusiasm for investigating and working independently. Good links are made between subjects, although the use of writing and information and communication technology in other subjects is not so well developed. Great care goes into planning, which is effective in meeting the needs of all. A diverse range of visits, including a residential in Year 6, encourage pupils to take learning out of the classroom and into daily life. Planning for pupils' personal, social and health education is detailed and is much of the reason for pupils' outstanding personal development.

The curriculum is enhanced well through a good number of out-of-school activities, which rotate regularly to increase the range available. These activities are popular and well attended. The library is a positive addition to the curriculum and encourages a member of the local community into school, sharing their extensive skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care for pupils is outstanding. Safeguarding requirements are met in full and risk assessments and health and safety procedures are robust and kept regularly under review. Security is paramount and pupils feel extremely safe and well cared for. The school has good links with outside agencies to provide extra support for individuals when needed. The arrangements for tracking individual pupils' progress are comprehensive. However, although pupils know clearly the level at which they are working and are made aware of targets for their next steps in learning, they are often given too many targets at once so they become daunting.

There are times when these targets have not been set, for instance pupils do not have individual targets this term.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has managed staffing turbulence well and has made good decisions in allocating staff responsibilities. These have been very effective and have resulted in the improvements made, particularly in the quality of teaching. Monitoring is thorough and involves staff at all levels as well as governors. This has led to an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and where improvements need to be made. This is exemplified well in the rise in standards in science and mathematics. Governors have supported the school's efforts to promote community cohesion well, bringing good knowledge of local needs. Although links have been established with a more ethnically diverse school, these are in their infancy and a few pupils have not had an opportunity to benefit.

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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?	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
The extent to which 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	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 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

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?	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

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

25 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School, Tamworth B79 8EN

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school recently. Mrs Palmer and I greatly enjoyed meeting you and hearing from you all about your school and how proud you are of it. You are right to be proud as it is a good school.

These are the best things we found about your school.

- You are making good progress and reach above average standards because you are being taught well.
- You are developing extremely well into sensible and responsible young people, who care very well for each other and are keen to do your best to help less fortunate people round the world.
- Those of you in the Pre-School and Reception classes are getting a good start to your schooling.
- All adults take really good care of you and so you feel safe and are sure that grown-ups will listen to you.
- You really enjoy your lessons because your teachers make sure that there is an interesting range of things for you to learn and organise trips for you.
- Your headteacher and teachers have really good plans to make your school even better.

We have suggested that your school improves the following:

- your standards in writing are not as good as standards in other subjects because you do not write in enough different genres. (If you don't know what this means ask one of your teachers.) You do not use your writing skills in other subjects often enough
- you often have too many targets to help you know what you need to learn next, which is confusing for you, and sometimes you do not have any.

I am sure you will continue to work hard and try to work towards achieving your targets. Keep up the good work!

With best wishes

John D Eadie Lead inspector