

St Richard's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118771
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	320501
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2008
Reporting inspector	David Curtis

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	181
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Smye-Rumsby
Headteacher	Lucy Nutt
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2006
School address	Castle Avenue Dover CT16 1EZ
Telephone number	01304 201118
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized primary school. Following its last inspection, it was placed in special measures. The school received monitoring visits in May and October 2007. Whilst most pupils are White British, an increasing proportion of pupils from Eastern Europe join the school throughout the school year and in all year groups. Therefore, there is an increase in the proportion of pupils learning English for the first time. Standards on entry into Reception vary from year to year, but are broadly average overall. The advisory headteacher was appointed in September 2007. The local authority, diocese and governing bodies will federate this school with the Catholic secondary school from September 2008 and intend to appoint a permanent head of school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Through the good leadership of the advisory headteacher and the effective support from the local authority, the school is now on a firm footing and has the satisfactory capacity to improve further. The school's self-evaluation of its own performance has been very successful in identifying where improvements are needed. Key priorities focus clearly on raising standards and achievement. Parents and pupils recognise and value the improvements they see in the school.

Good improvement is seen in teaching and learning which has improved from inadequate to satisfactory, with an increasing proportion of lessons that are consistently good or better. This is most noticeable in Years 1 and 2. Teachers' planning is mostly good and meets the differing learning needs of most pupils. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the good progress made by pupils learning English for the first time. In the lower juniors, lesson introductions tend to be too long with teachers trying to give pupils too much information and/or not making the purpose of the lesson entirely clear.

Children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage because of satisfactory provision for them. In Years 1 to 6, achievement is satisfactory and standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average. Encouragingly, standards in Years 1 and 2 and Year 5 are above average and reflect the good progress made by pupils in these year groups. In the lower juniors, more able pupils do not make sufficient progress because they are not challenged enough. There are times, especially at the start of lessons, when they become slightly frustrated because they already know and understand what is taught. Improvements to the curriculum mean that pupils' progress in using literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills is satisfactory.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and underpinned by effective care, guidance and support. Pupils enjoy school and work hard in most lessons. Positive attitudes to learning support their improving achievement. Behaviour is mainly good. A small minority of pupils are challenging at times, but other pupils are confident that staff deal effectively with poor behaviour and that their learning is not disrupted. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy living and the need to stay safe both in and out of school.

Staff care for pupils very well. The support for new arrivals to the country is particularly effective, including peer support from pupils. Most pupils understand their targets and feel that teachers tell them how to improve their work. However, this is not embedded fully across all classes. New assessment procedures to track pupils' guided reading are not applied consistently, with the results that not all teachers are aware of strengths or areas of improvement needed to develop key skills in reading.

Through the effective support of the advisory headteacher, the senior leadership team makes a satisfactory contribution to day to day management. Although the team has a stronger understanding of the standards pupils achieve through monitoring teaching and learning, there is still room to develop further their monitoring roles so that they have a whole school picture of pupils' performance. Governance is satisfactory now that governors hold the school to account and challenge the senior leadership about school performance.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children settle quickly into the day to day routines of the school. They enjoy taking part in assemblies and during the inspection were delighted to receive the punctuality award (a cuddly toy that they keep for a week). Children benefit from the good support and examples set to them, especially by pupils in Year 6. By the end of Reception, children make satisfactory progress and reach the goals they are expected to achieve in all areas of learning, except in writing where they are below. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is a very strong focus on encouraging children to read. However, when children choose their own activities, staff do not always engage sufficiently in conversation with them in order to assess how their play can take their learning forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- In addition to maintaining its focus on raising standards and achievement, the school should:
- ensure that lesson introductions are not too long so that pupils maximise their learning
- ensure that in lessons more able pupils are challenged and extended in their learning, especially in the lower juniors
- ensure that all staff follow the procedures for assessing pupils' progress in guided reading lessons
- embed the monitoring of teaching and learning by the senior leadership team to improve their whole school overview of standards and achievement.

A small proportion of the 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

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. However, standards have been rising in Years 1 and 2, where pupils make good progress and standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. More able pupils in Years 1 and 2 make particularly good progress because they are challenged and extended in their learning. In Year 2, pupils make good use of ICT skills when writing imaginative stories for younger children. Standards in the current Year 5 are above average, with pupils' writing skills particularly impressive, such as in their stories written in the style of a famous author. From displays of work, there is convincing evidence of pupils producing good work in ICT, design and technology, especially textiles, and history. In the lower juniors, more able pupils do not make sufficient progress because work is not demanding enough. Pupils learning English for the first time make good progress. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same progress as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The strong Catholic ethos of the school plays an important part in their day to day lives and their relationships with staff and each other. Pupils enjoy celebrating the rich diversity of the many cultures represented in their school. The school council plays an important part in school life. It has made a significant

contribution to designing the new cloakroom and toilet facilities. During the inspection, members were very professional in acting as hosts/guides for a parents' evening. The council is certainly not backwards in coming forward and feels it has much more to offer the school, particularly in carrying out 'jobs'. Attendance is satisfactory and improving, with pupils responding positively to weekly rewards for good attendance and punctuality. Pupils' preparation for their future economic well-being is satisfactory, reflecting the satisfactory development of their key skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Most lessons begin with teachers sharing the purpose of the lesson with pupils. Checking that pupils understand this and giving pupils 'success criteria' so that they know how well they have achieved are not embedded consistently across all classes. Where pupils are challenged, they make significant progress in lessons. For example, in Year 2 more able pupils solved problems, such as 'find three-fifths of thirty' by the end of the lesson, when such problems were new learning for them. On occasions, especially in the lower juniors, lesson introductions are too long which results in a degree of restlessness because pupils, especially the more able, want to get on with their work. Teaching assistants are very effective and make a good contribution to pupils' learning, especially those new to the country and learning English. Marking is mainly good and helps pupils understand how they can improve their work, although the quality of this is inconsistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is improving, with noticeable strengths in pupils' greater use of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects. For example, Year 3 pupils use the Internet successfully to research life in Ancient Egypt. The short time allocated to science, especially in the juniors, is a worry to some staff, especially in maximising pupils' development of investigative and experimental science. The curriculum does not fully meet the needs of more able pupils in the lower juniors. The successful use of the 'Here I Am' programme makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being in developing pupils' self esteem. Pupils enjoy the range of extra-curricular activities provided, which contribute to their healthy lifestyles. The new 'school band' is proving particularly popular with pupils and parents. The curriculum is enriched by activities, such as the recent Book Week and a range of visitors and educational visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school meets current requirements for child protection and safeguarding its pupils. The support for vulnerable pupils is good from staff and through effective links with outside agencies. The commitment to staff training to meet the increasing challenge of more pupils arriving with no English has a positive impact on the school's success in meeting the needs of these pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well. All pupils have targets at a class or group level. Pupils like having these and most understand them. In lessons, teachers are inconsistent in reminding pupils to focus on their current targets as part of 'success criteria'.

Staff do not consistently apply procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' standards and progress in guided reading, so that they cannot readily identify where pupils need to improve their reading skills.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The advisory headteacher has made a significant contribution to school improvement. Following her appointment, she carried out a rigorous audit of current provision and immediately implemented steps to bring about improvement. The senior leadership team is confident in its role and makes a strong contribution to day to day management. It still has room to develop its monitoring role so that it has a firm grasp on standards and achievement across the school and further increases the school's satisfactory capacity to improve. There is greater consistency in the quality of teaching and the inadequate aspects of the school's work have been addressed. This has resulted from the very effective support given to the headteacher by the local authority, including consultant teachers and advanced skills teachers. Challenging targets are used effectively in the quest to drive up standards and achievement. Governors play a full part in holding the school to account and monitoring its work through a much improved programme of visits to the school. However, they are not sufficiently rigorous in ensuring that all of the governing body's statutory duties, responsibilities and policies are reviewed regularly and are therefore up to date.

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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?	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?	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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

17 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Richard's Catholic Primary School, Dover CT16 1EZ

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us. We enjoyed meeting you in lessons and around the school. In particular, we would like to thank the school council for meeting us. I am delighted to tell you that your school no longer requires special measures. Your school is now satisfactory and improving well, and you all play an important part in this. These are the areas that we think are strong features.

- Most of you achieve as well as you should and reach standards expected for your age.
- Your relationships with each other are good and you really help new children arriving in your school to settle in quickly and make friends.
- Most of you enjoy lessons and work hard because you know what is expected of you.
- Staff care for you well and help you to be safe and healthy.
- Those who lead and manage your school are determined to help you continue to get better in your learning.

There are some important things that the school needs to do and these are:

- make sure the start of lessons is not too long so that you can get on with your work sooner
- make sure that those of you who sometimes find work easy are given work which really makes you think and work hard
- ensure that all teachers regularly check up on your progress in guided reading lessons
- ensure that those who lead and manage the school know how well you are all doing across the school.

You can help by continuing to work hard and telling teachers if work is too easy.

Yours sincerely

David Curtis Lead inspector

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David Curtis
Lead inspector