

St Catherine's Catholic Primary School, Littlehampton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126040
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	320539
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Stephen Long HMI

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	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Liz Bedford
Headteacher	Gill Howell
Date of previous school inspection	8 June 2006
School address	Highdown Drive Littlehampton BN17 6HL
Telephone number	01903 716039
Fax number	01903 722521

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Catherine's is smaller than most primary schools. Whilst the majority of its pupils are of White British heritage, the proportion from other ethnic groups is rising and is above the national average. Notably, numbers from Polish and Indian backgrounds are growing alongside pupils from a more established Portuguese community in the town. Of these pupils, a high proportion is at the early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also above average and has risen in recent years. When the school was inspected in June 2006 it was judged to be providing an inadequate standard of education and to require special measures. The school has been led for the last year by an acting headteacher. Recent efforts to recruit a substantive headteacher have been unsuccessful and the acting headteacher has accepted the post for another year pending further steps to make a substantive appointment. The turnover of staff and mobility of pupils was high after the last inspection but has stabilised since the start of this academic year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Catherine's is an improving school which has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and is now providing a satisfactory standard of education and care. In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Good leadership by the acting headteacher has raised staff's and pupils' aspirations, encouraged staff teamwork, and improved engagement with parents and carers. School development plans include challenging targets for pupils' achievement and ensure actions to bring about improvement are taken in a logical order. Local authority (LA) personnel have supported the staff well so they now have satisfactory capacity to improve independently. The effectiveness of staff in leadership roles has improved and is satisfactory, although there are inconsistencies in their ability to monitor their areas of responsibility, plan what to do next and evaluate the impact made. Analysis of assessment data and monitoring of lessons give the acting headteacher and senior staff a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievement. This is used well to improve teaching and the curriculum. However, evaluating how well the school supports the pupils' overall personal development and planning initiatives to tackle relatively weaker areas is underdeveloped.

Pupils make satisfactory progress toward challenging targets because of better teaching, more accurate tracking of progress, and better intervention to remedy underachievement. Standards are rising but are below average and the school knows there is further to go. Lessons in English and mathematics have strengths in meeting the needs of pupils of different abilities through providing tasks that link well to learning objectives. However, these qualities are not consistently evident in lessons in all subjects and in all classes. The curriculum is better adapted to pupils' needs, with emphasis given to supporting literacy and numeracy. Improving the broader curriculum is a priority for the school and development work is suitably focused.

The atmosphere for learning is more positive and the school is a calmer place to be. Pupils enjoy school more and the majority behave well and feel safe. The school works hard to support good behaviour through applying consistent expectations, which is helped by more stable staffing, and by offering good support for those who find it difficult to behave properly. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for those speaking English as an additional language, has also improved so that they too make satisfactory progress.

Regular guidance is provided for pupils' academic development through marking and verbal feedback. Whilst much of this is of good quality, the pupils are not sufficiently involved in the process of assessing their own work. They do not take the initiative enough in deciding how to improve to reach their targets and are too dependent on support from staff in order to move forward.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Good care for the children ensures they settle quickly and supports good personal and social development. Attainment on entry has fallen in recent years and children's skills are lower than usually found. A much higher proportion of children now arrive at the early stages of learning to speak English and/or with limited experience of formal education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and the children make satisfactory

progress from their starting points. The learning environment has been reorganised to reflect areas of learning more closely and provide better support for children when they select activities. Most learning is planned to meet children's varying needs. However, tasks and learning objectives are not always explained clearly in teacher-led work and children are not always guided toward appropriate activities when choosing what to do for themselves. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, although full use is not made of the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation to bring about improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Replicate the good teaching increasingly evident in mathematics and English lessons in other subjects.
- Develop pupils' independence as learners so pupils are able to decide how to improve their work in order to meet their targets.
- Ensure all staff with leadership and management responsibilities are fully engaged in monitoring, evaluating and improving their areas.
- Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' personal development and well-being to target improvements in provision and measure the impact.

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

On joining Reception, there are weaknesses in children's personal, social and emotional development and language and communication skills. Whilst children make satisfactory overall progress, they do well in these areas, although their attainment remains below that expected.

Improved progress by pupils in Years 1 to 6 was not reflected in last year's assessments in Year 2 for reading, writing and mathematics, nor in the Year 6 tests for English and mathematics, because the measures to raise standards had insufficient time to make an impact. However, the most recent assessment data and observation of progress in lessons indicate that pupils are learning more rapidly and are on course to do better this year in mathematics and English assessments. Standards remain below average overall, with a particular legacy of gaps in basic literacy skills. Standards in science are improving, but have been slower to rise, and remain below average because this subject has understandably received less emphasis than literacy and numeracy thus far.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The pupils' growing enjoyment of school is reflected in better attendance, good relationships with each other and with staff, and good social development by Year 6. A minority sometimes finds difficulty behaving well or following basic routines, but most pupils exhibit positive attitudes to learning. They feel well cared for and are confident that any bullying will 'be sorted out' by staff and that they can turn to staff if they have concerns. Although attitudes to learning are better, the pupils lack confidence in learning independently and are overly dependent on staff to show them how to improve. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how to lead healthy lives by eating good food and taking exercise. Cultural development is good; pupils

have a good understanding of other cultures and relate well to each other, benefiting from their increasingly varied backgrounds. Pupils' contribution to the community remains good and there have been further developments, for example in the range of work taken on by the school council. Improving academic achievement and better skills in areas such as teamwork now provide a satisfactory basis for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

In most mathematics and English lessons, learning objectives and tasks meet pupils' varying needs well. In other subjects, these strengths are less evident. Learning objectives, and the tasks enabling them to be met, are not always made clear to pupils and do not consistently meet the full range of needs. Teachers' assessment of pupils' progress in lessons is improving, for example through questioning. Monitoring of pupils' progress over time has improved sharply in mathematics and English, and is used well to plan teaching and identify pupils needing more help. Tracking pupils' progress is improving in science but is in its infancy in other subjects. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities involves better identification of needs, provision in lessons and monitoring of progress. Improved support for pupils speaking English as an additional language involves good strategies such as visual exemplification. Teaching assistants contribute well to learning when leading small group withdrawal sessions and group work in lessons, although they are not always used productively in whole class teaching.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum supports learning in mathematics and English well through suitably demanding tasks at each age. Initiatives, such as guided reading and the teaching of letters and sounds, are bearing fruit and pupils are starting to enjoy reading. Parents and carers are much more involved in supporting their children's reading. Much emphasis has rightly been placed on developing intervention programmes for pupils who are behind in literacy and numeracy and these are good. The school is working hard to develop other areas of the curriculum such as science. Links between subjects are now well planned to reinforce learning and are making an increasing contribution to pupils' enjoyment of learning. However, it is not always clear how work will be provided to meet pupils' differing levels of attainment in each subject. Provision for religious education is satisfactory. The school's Catholic ethos is more evident and ensures satisfactory spiritual and moral development, although it is not clear how pupils' knowledge and understanding of these aspects are developed through the wider curriculum. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. These include sports related clubs which pupils enjoy and which support them in leading healthy lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Vulnerable pupils are identified, monitored and supported well, including through work with external agencies such as social services. Better communication with parents where attendance is a concern has had a positive impact, although a few still take their children out of school for holidays. The improvements seen in behaviour are due in part to better provision for pupils

with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for whom English is an additional language. Some of these pupils found it difficult to behave well because they were not making progress; they are now less frustrated and consequently better behaved. Support from LA personnel to improve the induction and assessment of pupils at the early stage of learning English has been good and is enabling the school to develop its own provision in this area. Academic support and guidance are now satisfactory. Pupils receive useful verbal and written feedback, especially in mathematics and English, but increasingly in other subjects. However, pupils are not sufficiently challenged to take action in response to the guidance given, for example when marking indicates that work needs to be revisited. Pupils usually know their learning targets in mathematics and English, but are not clear enough about what to do to reach them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership of the acting headteacher has developed rapidly. She receives increasingly effective support from the deputy headteacher, both in that role and as subject leader for mathematics, and from the subject leader for English. Others in positions of responsibility, such as the coordinator for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the science subject leader, are developing their leadership of their areas. Leadership of other subjects is embryonic. The acting headteacher involves staff as a team in developing the vision for the school and sensitively ensures that everyone knows what to do whilst firmly holding each to account.

Monitoring and evaluation are much improved in checking the quality of teaching, making sure pupils are on target and identifying further priorities, including staff training. The monitoring of pupils' wider personal development is less effective. Whilst behaviour has improved, the school development plan contains too few sharply focused priorities in this area and the school does not gather enough evidence to measure its effectiveness or enable further improvements in provision to be targeted.

Governance is satisfactory. The chair of governors provides good leadership and other governors are growing in effectiveness. They challenge the school more effectively, for example through the work of a small team who focus closely on monitoring achievement and ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Catherine's Catholic Primary School, Littlehampton BN17 6HL

Thank you for your help during the recent inspection. This letter is to tell you what I found. When the school was inspected nearly two years ago it was not doing a good enough job for you. This has now changed, the school has improved and is giving you a satisfactory quality of education.

- The headteacher and the staff work well together to improve the school.
- You are now making as much progress in your mathematics and English as other pupils of your age, although there is still some lost ground to make up in these subjects and in other areas such as science.
- Lessons are more interesting and help you learn more because the staff have a better idea of what each of you needs to be given next to learn.
- If you fall behind with your work the staff notice this much more quickly and either help you in lessons or work with you in smaller groups.
- Those of you who find learning more difficult, including those learning to speak English as a second language, are now getting better help.
- Behaviour has improved and most of you behave well and want to learn. You told me that you feel safe at school and that staff look after you well.
- You help by taking on responsibilities around the school when you can.
- Some of you have been missing time from school for holidays; this has changed in some cases, although some of you still go on holiday in term time.

I have asked the headteacher to include the following areas in future developments.

- Make sure that the better progress you now make in mathematics and English is matched by your progress in other subjects.
- Involve you more in deciding how to improve your work rather than relying on the staff to tell you.
- For staff who lead different areas of the school's work to think carefully about what to do next and check the difference made by what they do.
- Check how well the school is supporting your development as well balanced young people, for example checking that you all know how to lead healthy lives and behave safely, and give more help to those who need it.

Good luck for the future and thanks again. Yours sincerely

Stephen Long Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex B

13 March 2008

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Littlehampton BN17 6HL**

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Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector