

St Cecilia's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102993
Local Authority	Sutton
Inspection number	323723
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Thrusell

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	484
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Pieroni M.B.E.
Headteacher	Mrs Catharina Mayhew
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	London Road North Cheam Surrey SM3 9DL
Telephone number	020 8337 4566
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Cecilia's is a very large, popular primary school. It has an after school club for pupils at the school, which is managed by the governing body. About a third of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, but none of these is at an early stage of learning English. A small minority of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average; this includes an above-average proportion with statements of special educational need. These pupils have a variety of needs including speech, language and communication, and autism. The school has Healthy School and Activemark awards. The current headteacher has been in post for just under a year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Cecilia's is a good school. It has some outstanding features. The new headteacher has quickly gained the confidence of staff, governors and parents, and has encouraged the involvement and development of leadership and management at all levels. A very strong partnership has been forged with parents. One parent commented, 'A very approachable head who takes time to listen to your point of view'. Parents are very keen to be involved in their children's education, evidenced when Year 1 pupils demonstrated their computer skills to them, accessing a learning programme that they could use at home. These very strong links with parents contribute to the excellent level of care provided for pupils, their outstanding personal development and the high standards they achieve.

Pupils greatly enjoy school. They particularly appreciate the opportunities provided to take on responsibilities and that the school trusts them to carry these out. The Squabble Busters are effective in ensuring that any minor disagreements are resolved. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities they have for sport, especially when competing against other schools. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of physical activity and keeping to a healthy diet, as recognised in the national awards. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they have very positive attitudes to school and learning, which contribute to the good progress made by them in lessons.

Pupils achieve well. Assessments at the end of Year 2 show that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. National testing at the end of Year 6 shows standards in English, mathematics and science to be well above average. The school has identified that writing is the weaker element within English and is taking action to bring about improvements. This is fairly recent and yet to be fully monitored and evaluated for its impact on achievement and standards. Pupils' progress is tracked thoroughly throughout the school, showing some inconsistency both between classes and year groups, not only in the progress made in writing but also in other subjects. Where pupils are not making the expected progress towards the challenging targets set for them, a well-focused support programme is put in place that accelerates their learning and helps them to catch up. This is reviewed termly to ensure that this sharp focus is maintained.

Teachers are accurate in their assessments of pupils' learning and progress. They recognise the different levels at which pupils are working, including the more able and those with learning difficulties. As a result, they are becoming more skilled at identifying what pupils need to learn next, to ensure that good progress is maintained. Often teachers ask searching questions to extend pupils' thinking skills, and give pupils opportunities to discuss their views and opinions with each other. In one outstanding mathematics lesson, Year 6 pupils were confidently explaining their strategies and reasoning for problem-solving activities. However, the school has identified that this practice needs to be developed further in order to enhance and challenge pupils' learning and understanding.

Other areas of school improvement, based on careful self-evaluation, have also been identified. Action to support and enhance learning through the use of information and communication technology (ICT) has already met with some success. This shows that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a flying start. They enter school with a level of knowledge and skills expected for their age. They settle quickly and happily into routines because they feel very safe and secure, and make good progress. By the time they enter Year 1, most reach the expected goals for their learning and many exceed them. This is because of good and sometimes outstanding teaching. One parent commented, 'I am very pleased with all my son has learnt so far; he doesn't even realise how much he has learnt as it is done in a fun and memorable way'. The organisation of 'free flow' between classes enables children to participate fully in the exciting range of role play opportunities provided for them, from the garden centre and the Indian restaurant to the outside garage. The school has worked hard to ensure there is a consistent approach to teaching children to link sounds and letters (phonics). This has been successful and children make very good progress in this area of their learning. Staff have recently focused on activities designed to improve writing, especially for boys who were not doing as well as girls. This has begun to bear fruit. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to encourage early writing skills. The provision, both indoors and out, is exciting and nurturing. There is an emphasis on building confidence and developing personal, social and emotional skills. Behaviour is excellent and relationships are trusting and friendly. One parent commented, 'The teachers and teaching assistants make a massive difference. Our son loves them all and has built a special bond with them'. Staff encourage children's early independence and a good awareness of staying healthy. One child said, 'We wash our hands before snack time to get the germs off'. Teachers keep a close check on how well children are doing, but sometimes miss opportunities to extend their thinking through questioning, and to record some of their achievements. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed and there is a good understanding of the strengths and areas to develop.

What the school should do to improve further

- Fully monitor and evaluate the actions being taken to raise achievement and standards, especially in writing, in order to ensure their success.
- Provide opportunities in all lessons for pupils to discuss their learning, to further develop their involvement and understanding.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. When they leave the school in Year 6, standards are well above average, with a significant proportion reaching higher than expected levels for their age. All groups of learners, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, make similar progress. School records show that achievement in writing is not as strong as in other subjects. Actions to ensure more consistent progress in this and other subjects have been introduced. These include the introduction of a published programme to teach sounds and letters and to develop reading and writing skills for younger pupils. Older pupils are being encouraged to evaluate their written work and to consider how improvements could be made. More opportunities to write within different subjects are providing greater interest and purpose for writing. These initiatives are well considered, but have yet to be monitored and evaluated for their impact. In mathematics, there is a greater emphasis on using and applying taught skills; there are now more opportunities planned within science for pupils to learn from first-hand investigations. Within all subjects,

the school is placing a greater emphasis on speaking and listening and the development of thinking skills, in order to raise achievement and standards further.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils respond exceptionally well to the strong Christian values that the school promotes. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are very happy at school and this is reflected in the pleasure they take in their learning and excellent attendance. They have a very clear understanding of how to stay safe. Relationships are a strength and pupils enjoy each other's company. They are respectful of adults and other children. Pupils enjoy learning about other cultures and religions and recognise the importance of respecting the backgrounds and beliefs of others to create a harmonious community. This was demonstrated when Year 6 pupils sat down to a Seder meal organised by a Jewish visitor. They are able to reflect on sensitive issues and have a strong sense of right and wrong. Pupils take their responsibilities very seriously and carry out their duties conscientiously. School council members are pleased that their views and ideas are acted upon and said, 'We want to make a difference and help other children'. The Red Hats, who give support and friendship to children at playtimes, feel they are privileged to be trusted by younger children. Pupils also make an excellent contribution to the wider community through their fundraising for charities and their participation in musical and sporting events. Their exceptional personal qualities, together with their good acquisition of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, ensure pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are generally engaging, well planned and enjoyed by learners. In better lessons, teachers use questioning well, encouraging pupils to give reasoned responses. This improves their speaking and listening skills and also develops their deeper knowledge and understanding of the subject being taught. The school is working to develop this aspect further. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. They use interactive whiteboards well, particularly in the introductions to lessons when they share the purpose of lessons with pupils. Pupils greatly appreciate knowing what they are going to be learning about and what they are expected to achieve in the lesson. One commented, 'It's great fun and helps you to get really involved'. Teaching assistants make a considerable contribution to pupils' learning. They work closely with teachers, supporting individuals and small groups. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language are well taught and receive a good level of additional support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Themed events such as the multicultural and healthy living weeks, along with visits and visitors to school, very successfully add to the richness of the curriculum. These activities broaden pupils' personal experiences well, widen their horizons and make a notable contribution to pupils' outstanding personal development. Pupils speak with enthusiasm of the residential trip where they learnt new skills such as rock climbing and abseiling as well as developing their personal skills. As one child said, 'We had to work in teams with people we wouldn't normally

choose to work with; we had to look out for each other and appreciate other people's skills'. Pupils appreciate and enjoy the wide range of after school clubs and look forward to Fun Fridays when they can select their own activities. The school has begun to link together different subjects to make learning more interesting and relevant for pupils. A start has been made in using and developing writing and ICT skills in this way, although this is yet to be fully monitored for its impact on pupils' learning. There are very good links with other schools that contribute to pupils' learning and well-being. For example, Year 6 pupils have email buddies in a local high school who support them when they join this school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The pastoral care of pupils is a particular strength of the school. Procedures to ensure that pupils are protected, safe and secure at school are rigorously applied. As a result, pupils feel extremely safe and well cared for. The school demonstrates a high level of commitment to ensuring that the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well met. Highly productive links with a wide range of outside agencies support pupils with specific learning difficulties, such as autism, extremely well. The support for vulnerable children and their families is excellent. Thorough systems are in place to assess and monitor pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers have a clear overview of how well each child is doing. Effective use is made of the information to identify and support pupils who need extra help with their work. The involvement of pupils in evaluating their work in lessons and teachers' constructive marking raises pupils' awareness of what they have achieved and where they need to improve. The after school club provides pupils with a safe and friendly environment where they can relax with their friends and take part in an enjoyable range of activities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and senior leaders very effectively promote pupils' personal development and well-being and ensure an extremely high level of care for pupils. A good programme of monitoring is in place and leaders are accurate in their self-evaluation, clearly identifying appropriate areas for improvement. Although pupils overall achieve well, through rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress, staff have recognised that there is some inconsistency in progress across the school and that achievement and standards in writing need to be raised. The school's actions are well planned but need more time to show significant impact in these areas. This monitoring of progress, and regular meetings to discuss how well pupils are doing, along with classroom observations, have identified where some teachers need additional support and those aspects of teaching and learning that need to be developed further. A programme of professional development and support is helping to ensure that a good quality of teaching and learning is maintained. Governors support the school well. Policies and procedures are regularly updated. Named governors are now linked to subjects and other aspects of the school's work in order to facilitate their monitoring role. The school promotes pupils' recognition and understanding of local and global communities well and is looking further at ways of strengthening links with them.

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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?	1
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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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	1
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	1

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?	1

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**

24 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cecilia's Catholic Primary School, Surrey, SM3 9DL

On behalf of the inspectors, I am writing to let you know what we found when we visited your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection. We spoke with some of you during our visit and you were always interesting to talk to, extremely polite and helpful. You spoke very enthusiastically about enjoying school and all of the things in which you take part. St Cecilia's is a good school.

We liked these things the most.

- Children get a good start to school in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- You work hard in your lessons and your behaviour is excellent.
- You are rightfully proud of your school and of all of the excellent opportunities that are provided.
- The school makes sure that you are very safe and well looked after.
- Those of you who fall a little behind or find learning difficult are given good quality help.
- You thoroughly enjoy school and are all keen to keep fit and eat the right things.
- You are very keen to take on responsibilities and want to make the school even better.
- Your headteacher is doing a good job; she is well supported by all staff and governors.

We have asked the school to improve in two areas of its work.

- Although you do well in school and generally achieve high standards, you do not always make sufficient progress in your writing. The school has plans to help you with this and must check that these are working, and that standards in writing improve.
- We know that you like to answer questions and to talk about what you are doing in lessons. This encourages you to think more about what you are learning and helps you to gain a better understanding. Lessons need to provide more opportunities for this.

We did enjoy visiting your school and watching you learn.

Yours faithfully

Peter Thrussell

Lead Inspector