

St Anthony's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110040
Local Authority	Slough
Inspection number	325086
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Barry Jones

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)	407
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	Mrs Pauline Stone
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Stacey
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Farnham Road Farnham Royal SL2 3AA
Telephone number	01753 645828

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
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Fax number

01753 645011

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

At St Anthony's there are higher proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and for whom English is an additional language than in the great majority of schools. A significant number are at the early stages of learning English. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are average. The latter relate mainly to specific learning difficulties and to speech, language and communication. There are more pupils who join or leave the school at unusual times than in most schools. Over the last few years most of the new arrivals have been Polish and the school has recently been designated as a Centre of Excellence for newly arrived Polish children. The school has Healthy Schools Status and Activemark. There is provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage through two Reception classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Anthony's is a satisfactory school. It is improving and has many good features. The school has made strenuous efforts to accelerate pupils' progress under the very good leadership of the headteacher. However, a period of high turnover in staffing three years ago hampered the school's work. Staffing has now stabilised and this is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching, and pupils' progress in lessons has increased as a result. The school has succeeded in maintaining high levels of care, contributing significantly to pupils' good personal development and well-being. The Catholic ethos pervades the work of the school. This is appreciated by most parents. One wrote, 'St Anthony's is caring and compassionate. My children are happy there'.

Children start in Reception with communication and language skills well below those expected for their age. This is the case for many of the pupils who join in later years too. At the end of Year 2, pupils' standards are consistently well below average. At the end of Year 6 standards vary but are below average overall. In 2007, results in mathematics in Year 6 tests were exceptionally low. The school analysed the reasons for this and applied several strategies to improve results, including making specific provision for more able pupils and teaching pupils in groups according to their ability. This led to a marked improvement in mathematics results in 2008. However, English results in the same year dipped, particularly in writing.

The frequent movement of pupils into and out of school during a key stage makes it harder than usual to assess the value added by the school. The school is developing thorough analyses to identify patterns and trends. Younger pupils make satisfactory progress but too few attain the higher level in mathematics and writing. There are still some inconsistencies in teaching and sometimes work is not sufficiently challenging for the more able pupils. A high priority is given to the teaching of reading throughout the school and consequently pupils make rapid progress in reading skills. Pupils who start with little English are helped to settle. They receive good support and, over time, they make the same progress as their peers. Older pupils are now making good progress as a result of the consistently good teaching they receive. Nevertheless, because of the variations between key stages, subjects and from year to year, achievement is satisfactory overall but improving.

Pastoral care is good; pupils feel safe and say that adults take good care of them. Pupils respond positively and behave well in lessons and around the school. The school is extremely welcoming. This has been recognised by the award of Centre of Excellence for its support for newly arrived Polish children and their families. The school makes an effective contribution to promoting community cohesion, particularly through its strong links with the Church. It is also establishing links with a school in Gambia to enhance pupils' understanding of other cultures. Pupils enjoy school and a good curriculum contributes to their positive attitudes.

The school has strengthened the tracking of pupils' progress. This has enabled it to take effective action which, in turn, has led to improved achievement. The school has nurtured outstanding partnerships with parents, agencies and the local community. Given the strong leadership team and pupils' improving achievement, capacity to improve further is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children are welcomed into Reception and positive relationships are quickly established with parents. There are good induction procedures and home visits are usefully made to all families not known to the school. There is a caring atmosphere and children make good progress socially. In 2008, other skills were mostly still well below those expected for their age when they finished the Reception year. This partly reflected their low starting points but also that teaching was disrupted for one term. A new manager for the Early Years Foundation Stage started in September 2008. She is providing good leadership and has improved the organisation of the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a Polish speaker, she is able to give good support to some of the new arrivals and forge relationships with the parents. There is a high priority given to help children link sounds with letters. There are insufficient opportunities for children to develop their writing skills. Adult-led activities cover the required areas of learning but at times the children are gathered on the carpet for too long and their concentration wanes. There are sufficient opportunities for children to learn through independent play but they are not always purposefully engaged. Overall, children make satisfactory progress and good progress in reading and their personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the standards of writing throughout the school.
- Ensure pupils, particularly the more able ones, make good progress in Reception and Key Stage 1 through consistently good teaching.
- Ensure that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are purposefully engaged in all activities.

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

Trends have to be treated with some caution because of the significant changes in the make-up of cohorts from year to year. When new arrivals are taken into account, the trend at Key Stage 1 is slightly upwards. However, too few pupils attain the highest level, particularly in mathematics and writing. Some of the late joiners make outstanding progress once they master English. The school has identified White British pupils as making the slowest progress and individuals are being targeted for support. Pupils with learning difficulties make the same progress as their peers. The school has significantly improved its tracking procedures and has identified that progress dips in Year 4. It has put extra resources into this year group. It is too early to be certain of the effectiveness of these measures but good use is being made of the additional teaching group in Year 5.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have respect for other beliefs and cultures. Their contribution to the community is outstanding. Within school they willingly accept responsibilities. Older pupils help younger ones through the 'buddy' system,

there are playground helpers, and pupils support a wide range of charities and help extensively in the local community. There are many opportunities for pupils to contribute as members of the school council, the Peace and Justice group and the 'all stars', who are consulted by the school on curriculum issues. The pupils develop into mature, responsible young people. The improvements in pupils' numeracy and literacy skills mean that their future economic well-being is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching varies from satisfactory to outstanding. Teachers manage their classes well. They share objectives with pupils so that they know what to learn in a lesson. However, the quality of marking varies and does not always help pupils to see how they might improve further. Pupils make good progress in small groups when extra teachers are used to meet their needs. In other classes, the same work is sometimes set to all pupils and so the more able pupils are not challenged. The teaching is good in Key Stage 2 and for teachers with specialisms such as music and gymnastics. In some lessons there is a tendency for the teacher to talk too long and to ask too little of the pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Provision for personal, social and health education is good and underpins pupils' good development. For example, pupils have a good understanding of healthy living issues. This is shown by the award of Healthy School status and Activemark. Links are made between different subjects and this makes learning more meaningful for pupils. This was seen in lessons where information and communication technology was used well in the context of a Vikings topic. Teachers are making effective links with mathematics in science work. Themed weeks and other special events make the work interesting. A wide range of visits and visitors adds to the pupils' enjoyment of school. For example, the school has established links with the Royal Opera House and performs its own opera annually with guidance from the Opera's workshops. Music is a strength of the school and there is a good range of other clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good care and support emanates from the strength of the relationship between the teachers and their pupils. This is complemented by good support from learning mentors for pupils with challenging behaviour. Pupils who join with little English are supported well by classmates who speak their language. Newly arrived Polish children are well taught by Polish speakers in small groups until they gain sufficient proficiency in English to enable them to join the whole class. There is effective working with other agencies to support vulnerable children. The school has worked very closely with the attendance officer. This has led to an improvement in attendance and a reduction in the number of pupils who regularly miss school. Academic guidance is good and has been enhanced this year by using the new computer software well. Pupils know their targets and how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The senior leadership team is growing in strength and stature. There is increasingly effective use of performance data to identify underperformance. The school uses the information to deploy staff very effectively. For example, tracking data showed that pupils made less progress than they should have in Year 4 last year. As a consequence, the school has created an extra teaching group for these pupils in Year 5. It is also carefully monitoring the current Year 4. Similarly, in response to the slow progress made by more able pupils in Key Stage 1 in the past, these pupils are taught as a separate group for mathematics in the current Year 2. It is too soon to judge the effectiveness of these measures but the early signs are promising. More work is needed to ensure that pupils' writing skills match those for reading. Subject coordinators have responded positively to opportunities to take more responsibility and carry out their roles effectively. There is a comprehensive programme for monitoring the quality of teaching. It provides useful feedback on how teachers might improve but there is insufficient focus on the progress made by pupils in the lesson. The governors provide effective support and challenge to the school. There are very effective links with parents and the quality of the partnership has been recognised externally. The school also employs bilingual staff to meet the needs of the community and ensure that everyone can be involved in the life of the school. As one parent commented, 'I feel that I am working in partnership with the school'.

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?	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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
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?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	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
The extent to which 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	1
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 learners' needs?	3
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**

11 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Anthony's Catholic Primary School, Farnham Royal, SL2 3AA

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school recently. Visitors comment that the school is warm and welcoming and we agree. You told us that you enjoy school and feel safe there. Your school council representatives said that their views are valued. They have lobbied the borough council for more recycling bins and promoted the gardening club. More recently you have formed a Peace and Justice group. We enjoyed the pizzas that some of you made for us and some of your friends.

We agree with the school that it is satisfactory and is improving with several good features. The things we like particularly are:

- you get on well together and St Anthony's is a happy family
- more of you are doing well in your work
- the school takes good care of you
- new pupils are made to feel very welcome
- there are many interesting and fun things for you to do
- the school is led well by the headteacher and her team.

There are three things we have asked the school to do make things even better:

- improve your writing
- ensure that you all get the best teaching
- make sure the youngest children are learning in things they do.

It was a privilege to visit your school. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Barry Jones

Lead Inspector