

St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112907
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325716
Inspection date	12 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Geof Timms

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)	207
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 Robert Hobson
Headteacher	Mr Bryan Lowe
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Matlock Road Belper Derbyshire DE56 2JD

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	12 February 2009
Inspection number	325716

Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the achievement throughout the school, especially in writing and for different groups of pupils; the impact of curriculum changes especially the introduction of thinking skills; the work of the senior leadership team especially in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Evidence was gathered from documents, observations of teaching and other aspects of school life, discussions with staff, pupils and school governors and parents' views. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is situated in the town of Belper and serves a wide catchment area. It is of broadly average size. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Fewer than average numbers of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and only a small number have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average. The main needs are specific or moderate learning difficulties, or behavioural, emotional and social needs. Three pupils are looked after by the local authority. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills and Health Schools awards and is a member of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust.

A club providing breakfast, after-school and holiday care is run on the site but it is not managed by the governing body and is inspected separately

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding school provides an excellent education, which helps pupils to make exceptionally good progress in their learning. This is due to some high quality teaching and challenging and well-focused leadership. A very large majority of the parents are happy with the school. Typical of many comments was one who wrote, 'I feel St Elizabeth's is a very well balanced school, a high quality of education but equally a strong emphasis on emotional and moral education.'

When children start at the school they are assessed in some depth and this data shows many have lower than expected communication, literacy and numeracy skills. By the end of the Reception year, however, they reach standards at least in line with, and often above those expected. This outstanding progress continues throughout the school and by the time most pupils leave the school their standards in English, mathematics and science are above average and sometimes exceptionally high. Standards in writing are not as high and the school has put in place a number of measures that are already having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' work. More interesting ideas and reasons for writing are encouraging the boys to write more. The content of much of the writing, especially in Key Stage 2 has clearly improved. Further improvement is being hindered by the lack of depth, maturity and richness of pupils' vocabulary. In addition, they do not always take as much care as they could over the presentation of their work or in their spelling and use of punctuation.

Pupils who find learning difficult, or who have emotional or behavioural needs, make excellent progress due to the high quality support they receive. The headteacher's expertise and interest in this area, the work of the special educational needs coordinator and those adults who specifically work with these pupils help them make outstanding gains in their learning. This is also the result of the close links kept with parents. This is typified by one who wrote, 'Working together has been key and we are encouraged to discuss any concerns as they arise.'

The school also makes good efforts to challenge the most able pupils, through work in lessons but also special events such as interesting projects with similar pupils from other schools. There are no significant differences in achievement between boys and girls or any other groups of pupils. The school's excellent tracking systems enable early interventions to be put in place to support any child that is seen to be slipping. This is praised by the children themselves. They recognise the need for occasional catch-up programmes which are often carried out by the high quality teaching assistants.

The pupils are extremely well looked after and cared for. Safeguarding requirements are securely met and child protection procedures are robust. Pupils say they are well cared for and they have adults they would trust to talk to if they had concerns or worries. In addition, the school provides them with excellent academic guidance and support through effective feedback. This helps pupils understand what they need to do to improve. Older pupils are learning to assess their own work more. Teachers' marking often results in clear interventions and they can then highlight in later work where improvement has occurred. Target setting is challenging and as they get older, pupils have a growing awareness of the level at which they are working.

The outstanding care, guidance and support result in excellent personal development. Pupils show a great enjoyment of all aspects of school life and they talk enthusiastically about lessons, their teachers, after school clubs and the opportunities they have to take responsibility. Through the school council, prefect and captain systems, older pupils have excellent opportunities to

have their voice heard and to make real difference to school life. In one recent excellent example of them contributing to the school community, older pupils were interviewed for a range of jobs to do with redesigning the infant playground, including photographers and designers. They take these roles very seriously. They demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lives and keep themselves safe. Their behaviour is exemplary in and out of lessons and this helps the teachers to provide activities that are more interesting. Attendance is above average. The school has recently carried out a lot of work to develop pupils' understanding of finance, to help prepare them for later life. Alongside the work done to improve their collaboration and cooperation skills, and the above average basic skills they achieve, this reflects outstanding preparation for the next stage in their education.

Pupils' exceptional achievement is the result of excellent teaching and learning. Teaching skills have been very well developed since the last inspection through a range of training and coaching activities, and more opportunities for staff to work together and spread good practice. The excellent curriculum has been very effectively redesigned to ensure a more thematic approach that is supporting pupils' use of skills across different subjects. During the inspection for example, pupils used numeracy skills during a spreadsheet project and a range of writing skills were evident in history topics. The recent introduction of teaching pupils thinking skills is yet to have a measurable impact on standards but the evidence of observations shows that pupils are improving their ability to work together, to talk through disagreements and to collaborate on tasks using team building skills. Teachers' excellent relationships with the pupils encourage their outstanding attitudes to learning. The deployment of teaching assistants and other helpers is very effective in providing pupils with more time with an adult in small groups.

The success of the school is largely due to outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher provides the school with dynamic and clearly focused leadership, and the senior leadership team have improved their role and the positive impact of their work since the last inspection. This is a strong and effective team which is challenging but supportive of the staff. Mutual respect is clearly evident and all staff work closely together to ensure the best possible provision for the pupils. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work has a clear impact on improving performance. The school is far from complacent and has a genuine desire to look beyond its walls to seek further good ideas and continuous improvement. This is evident in the current curriculum developments and the way the school is already looking forward to changes planned for the curriculum nationally in two years time. The particularly strong improvement since the last inspection, the accurate self-evaluation and the well-focused plans for the future indicate that the school has an outstanding capacity to improve. This judgement is supported by the work of the governing body. Governors have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is helped by the judicious use of the educational expertise found among them, especially in evaluating the pupils' progress. The governors show a willingness to look beyond the school's religious character and have good plans to extend the reach of their work to develop pupils' understanding of how others live through more of a focus on national and global issues, and a link with an inner city school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children in the Reception class make excellent progress due to the school's outstanding provision. The quality of the teaching is consistently good or better, and the support from other adults is of high quality. Children are provided with a wide range of challenging and interesting activities. There is an excellent blend of adult-led and child-selected activities.

Excellent use is made of the good outdoor classroom. During the inspection, for example, this provided very good opportunities for some boys to develop their early writing skills as they acted as police officers, gathering evidence. In addition, there is plenty of room for physical activities and children take full advantage of this using a range of apparatus and resources. The indoor accommodation is used very effectively and creative work has a high priority. The teaching of phonics is very effective. Children's progress is very well assessed and tracked and the data shows that they make excellent progress during the Reception year. Parents particularly praise the induction arrangements, which are very detailed and flexible, and provide for each individual's different needs. One, reflecting the views of others, said, 'my daughter is very happy and settled at school and has progressed really well since she started.' The levels of care and personal development provided for the children are outstanding; children are very happy and well prepared for the next stage in their education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of pupils' writing by helping them develop a richer vocabulary and raising expectations for their handwriting, spelling and use of punctuation.

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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?	1
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	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

13 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School, Belper, DE56 2JD

I want to thank you for the way you welcomed us when we visited your school recently. The things you told us about your school helped us a great deal and like you, we think you are lucky to be at such an excellent school. We were especially impressed with how well you behave in lessons and around the school, and how positive you are about your work. You all take a full part in your learning and this helps you make outstanding progress. Keep it up!

We think the teachers work very hard to create some interesting and exciting lessons and activities, and they are especially good at helping you understand what you need to do to get even better. They are excellently supported by Mr Lowe and the senior leadership team, who keep a close eye on how well everyone is doing, and quickly ensure you get extra help if you start to slip behind. You are very lucky with all of the adults who work in the school, and you told us how happy you are there and how safe you feel.

Even the best schools can get better. Your school has an excellent set of plans for its future improvement. In addition, we have asked the teachers to help you get even better at writing by helping you develop a wider and more mature vocabulary. You can help by taking more care with how your writing is presented, with your spelling and punctuation.

Thank you again for your help. Enjoy your time at St Elizabeth's and keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms

Lead inspector.