

St George's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115149
Local Authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	326135
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Sandra Tweddell

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)	205
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 Malcolm Clark
Headteacher	Mr Paul Parascandolo
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Eagle Way Shoeburyness Southend-on-sea Essex SS3 9RN

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2008
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Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average primary school takes in pupils from the areas of Shoeburyness, Great Wakering and Thorpe Bay. It takes children aged four and above in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Children enter school with the knowledge and skills that are expected of four year olds, but recently more have been starting with much ground to make up. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below most schools. Most pupils are from a White British background with an increasing number from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, predominantly Black or Black British African. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is increasing and is similar to most schools. These pupils have moderate learning and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school has more boys than girls.

Awards include the enhanced Healthy Schools, Investors in People and Active Sportsmark Awards and recently, the Southend Primary Languages Accreditation Scheme Award. Over the past two years, there has been a significant turnover of staff, including in the last year, the headteacher and one assistant headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has maintained high standards for a number of years and value for money is good. There are a number of outstanding features. For example, the school's very strong family culture supports pupils' excellent personal development. Pupils leave Year 6 well prepared for their future lives with a good understanding of how to live safely and healthily. Their skills of citizenship are supported well by the school's excellent links with the local community and their good knowledge of world events. Parents and pupils have great pride in the school and pupils really enjoy coming to school, which can be seen in their good attendance. Almost all parents are extremely pleased with the school, as one parent wrote, 'A superb school with a dedicated headteacher who is committed to improving the school.'

The changes of staff have affected achievement over the last two years, but overall achievement is good. This is because the recently appointed headteacher has quickly identified what the school needs to do to maintain its high standards. He is a good leader with a very good knowledge of the strengths of the school and has already had a positive impact on raising standards in writing across the school. Children make good progress during the EYFS so they are well prepared for Year 1. Standards at the end of Year 6 are well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science.

Good teaching and learning are one of the key factors behind pupils' good achievement. Relationships are very good so that pupils are responsive and eager to learn. Whilst planning overall for lessons is effective, it is stronger in English and so pupils make the most progress here, reaching high standards. The effective curriculum has many strong features, such as the wide variety of well attended extra-curricular activities, some of which make good use of the schools' excellent links with external agencies. The headteacher rightly wishes to develop the curriculum further so that pupils achieve equally highly in all subjects. The personal care for pupils is outstanding and their academic guidance is good in English and satisfactory in mathematics and other subjects.

Good leadership and management ensures the school runs very effectively on a day-to-day basis because of exemplary systems. There has been a large turnover of staff and leadership roles are still developing. Consequently, leaders have yet to have the opportunity to raise standards in their subject areas. Experienced governors with a good range of expertise challenge the school on financial matters through their committees. There has been good improvement on the areas identified for development in the last inspection. This, along with the impact of the actions of the effective leadership team gives the school good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children have a good start to their education due to effective leadership and good provision. Very good links with the large number of settings from which children come ensure children settle quickly. Until recently children have entered school with the learning expected of four year olds, but the changing population has caused some variation, with an increasing number starting with weaker social skills. The provision for personal development has been strengthened as a result. Children make good progress in all six areas of learning and their attainment at the end of the Reception class has risen over the past three years. The majority of children are working well within the expected goals for young children at the start of Year 1. Teaching and

learning are good and rigorous assessment is used effectively to shape the learning for each child. Children are cared for exceptionally well, including those who find learning difficult. Adults understand the children's needs. The learning environment has been effectively improved this term, though more remains to do to further improve access for physical development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in mathematics by using the methods that have been successful in English.
- Strengthen the leadership roles of all staff in order to raise standards in all curriculum areas to those in English.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in mathematics and science are above average at the end of Years 2 and 6 and are well above average by the end of Year 6 in English. Standards of writing across the school have improved this year because of effective use of professional development. Achievement across the school is good, but there is some variation across the classes due to inconsistency in teaching. Boys and girls make similar progress. Pupils who find learning difficult make good progress because the provision takes very careful account of their needs and the strong ethos of the school supports them well. Similarly, the small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve well. High achieving pupils make the progress that is expected of them, with pupils who are identified as gifted and talented receiving additional support through the school's excellent community links. As the school has focused upon English and mathematics, standards in other subjects are not as consistently high. The school has met its challenging targets for a number of years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The strong Catholic ethos permeates the life of the school and very effective use of its excellent partnerships promotes pupils' personal development exceptionally well. As a result, their spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Their awareness of cultural diversity is good. They are extremely proud of their school, responding with great enthusiasm to the many opportunities to take responsibility, for example, as school councillors and house captains. As play leaders they show how caring and supportive they are of each other when helping to resolve minor disagreements and organising playground games. In these and many other ways they have a genuine and significant impact on the daily and long-term life of the school. Pupils are eager learners who really enjoy school and this is reflected in the above average attendance levels. They know how to ensure their own and others' safety and their behaviour in lessons, assemblies and around the school is exemplary. The popularity of the many sporting activities on offer is an indication of their very clear understanding of a healthy lifestyle. Their outstanding personal qualities and a good grounding in the basic skills mean they are well prepared for the future. They leave the school, as one parent put it, 'as well-mannered and respectful individuals who care about themselves and others'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Excellent relationships based on mutual respect exist throughout the school and classrooms are attractive and stimulating workplaces. Vibrant displays across all subjects clearly reflect the value that teachers give to pupils' work. Teachers are consistently good at sharing learning intentions and success criteria with pupils in 'child-friendly' language. As a result, pupils understand why they are doing a particular piece of work and how to check their own performance within the lesson. Assessment is used very well in literacy to plan future learning but less effectively in other subjects. A good range of methods takes into account pupils' different learning styles, including role-play and practical activities. In one lesson, pupils enthusiastically evaluated the quality of the instructions provided for a variety of card games. These activities are well chosen to capture the interest of all but they particularly motivate the boys, who outnumber the girls in many classes. While teaching assistants provide good support for teachers and pupils during the activity sessions they are sometimes underused during introductions or discussions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has a good focus on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. It is matched extremely well to the needs of all pupils, particularly in English. It is well resourced to meet the learning needs of the large number of boys in the school with a wide range of resources. The curriculum for other subjects is not as extensive and although literacy is promoted well through other subjects, there are few meaningful cross-curricular links. The excellent range of extra-curricular activities is well attended. A strong personal education programme supports pupils' personal development very well and contributes very effectively to their knowledge about the community in which they live and their understanding of global issues. Pupils are fascinated by the large world map that is used by visitors to show where they come from. The programme for teaching French effectively uses local resources and is developing well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pastoral care is outstanding. From the time children start in the EYFS, their safety and care are top priorities shared by all staff. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust and clearly understood by all as demonstrated by the level of supervision especially following the many after school clubs at the end of the day. Excellent relationships and strategies such as the 'worry box' create an environment where pupils say they are able to talk freely about any concerns they might have, confident in the knowledge that staff will respond promptly and with fairness. There are excellent systems for tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school and older pupils in particular appreciate the value of target-setting. They agree that 'targets help us to get better step by step'. Parents are very appreciative of the good support provided for pupils who find learning difficult which enables them to achieve just as well as their peers. However, whilst academic guidance for English is very good it has yet to be matched in quality in other subjects, such as mathematics, and consequently standards here are not as high.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is a good leader who has set a clear direction to reach his vision of excellence. The effective use of the school's self-evaluation is based on the informative and useful checks the school makes. It is seen in the improving standards in writing and in the good provision for the increasing number of pupils who find learning difficult. The leadership team is still developing its roles but the two assistant headteachers, who have complementary strengths, support the headteacher effectively. The number of new teachers has affected middle management roles and one of the school's priorities is to develop their expertise as leaders. Governors are highly experienced and knowledgeable. They hold the school to account in financial matters but less so in other aspects of the school's life, as the checks they make are informal and governors rely on the headteacher for information. However, they have supported the school well through a period of change and governance is good overall. The school works very closely with its local community and has national and global links through the church and the curriculum. All areas identified for development by the last inspection have been tackled well. Along with the strong leadership of the headteacher and commitment of all staff, this gives the school good capacity to improve.

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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?	2
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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	2

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**

10 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St George's Catholic Primary School, Shoeburyness, SS3 9RN

Thank you for your welcome when we visited your school recently. We were impressed by your courtesy and cheerfulness when you were answering our questions. Thank you especially to the school council for giving up part of their lunch hour to talk with us. You were very informative and all of you are obviously proud of your school.

You go to a good school. You are achieving well and the standards of your work in English, mathematics and science are high. This is because your teachers teach you well and take your individual needs into account. Your work in writing has improved a great deal because you know what to aim for and how well you are doing. You told us that you feel extremely safe in school and all have considerable confidence in your teachers or other adults to advise you when you need help. We agree with you and your parents that you are especially well cared for. We observed that your behaviour is excellent and you are very caring of one another. Mr Parascandolo wants nothing but the best for you and he and other adults in the school are working well to achieve this.

We agreed the following next steps for your school with Mr Parascandolo.

- Although standards of your work in mathematics are above average, they are not as high as in English. Teachers are going to concentrate on bringing standards to the same level. You can help your school achieve this by using your personal targets to check how well you are doing.
- Your school has rightly ensured that standards in English are high. All leaders and teachers are now going to work to make sure standards are equally high in all subjects.

We enjoyed our visit to your school and would like to wish you every success for the future.

Best wishes

Sandra Tweddell

Lead inspector