

St Cross Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117483
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326623
Inspection date	12 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Cosway

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)	203
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 Marcia McKnight
Headteacher	Mrs Kathryn Hall
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	Upper Marsh Lane Hoddesdon Hertfordshire EN11 8BN
Telephone number	01992 467309
Fax number	01992 450362

Age group	4–11
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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 progress made by pupils throughout the school; the quality of teaching across the school; the provision for the Early Years and Foundation Stage children, and the effectiveness of leadership. They gathered evidence from observations of lessons, discussions with staff and pupils, analysis of parents' views and scrutiny of school documentation and policies, as well as scrutiny of pupils' work. 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 population of this average-sized primary School represents a mix of social backgrounds. For just over a third of pupils, English is their second language. Around twenty five children are at an early stage of learning English. Attainment on entry is close to national expectations. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below similar schools. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is close to the national average. Most of these pupils have specific learning difficulties. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made for children aged four to five years old in the school's Reception class. There is an after school club, for which the governing body has management responsibilities. It provides care for around 20 children daily, between 15.15 and 18.00. The school has received a number of national awards, including Healthy School and Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The pupils of St Cross learn in an atmosphere of trust, friendship and concern for the welfare of every member of the school family. Almost all parents are full of praise for all the school does for them and their children. Typical comments include: 'We have been made very welcome by everyone: St Cross is a very caring school'. Parents and carers have a justifiable confidence in the school and feel that it seeks out and values their views.

This is a good school because pupils make good progress in their learning and their personal development and well-being are outstanding. By the time they reach the end of Year 6, results in the national curriculum tests for 11-year-olds are above the national average. The proportions of pupils reaching above the normally expected level for their age in English and mathematics are well above the average nationally. Almost all make at least the expected progress from the levels they reached at the end of Year 2. Mostly, girls attain more highly than boys. Boys spoken to, commented that they learn best when they are actively involved in their learning. There are times when such opportunities are not always on offer. However, the school is in the process of revising its curriculum to make it more interesting for boys. Boys and girls make the best progress in Years 3 to 6, because some of the teaching is outstanding in this key stage. Attainment at the end of Year 2 varies from year to year. Currently, it is close to the national average, but few pupils reach above the expected level for their age. The school is working to raise the levels of challenge for these younger pupils so that more of them will reach their potential.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are keen to learn and, when asked why they like school, list learning about new things as one of the major factors, along with friendship and enjoyment of lessons. This contributes to the school's good attendance figures. The progress pupils make in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, along with the many opportunities they have to collaborate and work in teams, ensures that they are prepared well for their lives after school. They learn about economic well being in effective and practical ways. For example, each class council has a sum of money to spend on school improvements, but they have to double it through their own efforts before they can make spending decisions. They have excellent knowledge of the importance of healthy living and how to stay safe. Their behaviour in class and around school is usually exemplary, due in part to the consistently excellent control and management of classes by teachers. The expectations of behaviour and good manners are the same throughout the school. Older pupils have extensive responsibilities, such as register monitors or helpers in assembly, and all act as remarkably effective 'buddies' to younger children. They also contribute to the school community as members of the class councils. Pupils take a highly active role in the local community as well. Examples are carol singing in the town centre, entertaining senior citizens and collecting for local charities. They learn of and contribute to the wider world by studying other faiths, supporting street children in South America and all pupils are given the opportunity of learning French and Italian before the official school day commences.

The strong Catholic ethos of the school contributes to its inclusiveness. It teaches love and compassion and seeks to give equal opportunities to all. This is one reason why pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Teachers ensure that their needs are fully met and they get good additional support both in class and out. There is no evidence of racial tension within the school and the school regards community cohesion as an implicit part of its mission. Its provision is good. It works with the local church to encourage racial harmony and

to support cohesion amongst the many nationalities that make up the local population. Good links are evident with schools in Canada and France, and are being extended to include Italy.

The curriculum is good, with a strong and successful emphasis on the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. The provision for information and communication technology is very good and pupils make good progress as a result. There are many trips and visitors to enhance the curriculum and the pupils both enjoy and benefit from these first-hand experiences. The inspection took place in 'book week'. Pupils were full of enthusiasm for the books they had read and the activities provided, such as listening to a story teller and creating their own books. Children also enjoy their time at the out of school club, because of caring staff and an interesting and appropriate range of things to do. During the inspection, these included sewing, basketball and making Valentine's cards. The children love to play outside and the staff strongly encourage them to do so. A healthy snack and a time for tea provide children with healthy food and a drink.

Teaching is good, partly because teachers have high expectations of pupils. They plan lessons well to ensure that the work they set is appropriate for the different needs and abilities of the pupils in their classes. Lessons are well resourced, which promotes thorough understanding. Information and communication technology is used very well to help pupils to learn. Older pupils know their targets and this helps them to make good, sometimes excellent, progress. A strong feature of teaching in Years 4 to 6 is the way that pupils are taught to recognise those features in their work that need to be improved and often, in pairs, how to review and improve their work. The staff are working to improve assessment for the younger pupils to make it more rigorous and helpful. This work recognises that some aspects of academic guidance need improvement and so, although other aspects of support, care and guidance are outstanding, it is good overall. All the children are known and cared for exceptionally well. Links with families are close and supportive. Child protection procedures and safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. Links with external agencies are very effective in providing support for pupils who need it.

The school has had many changes of senior staff since the last report. It has come through this period of instability well. All its staff with management responsibilities are self-critical and set challenging targets. Leaders and governors rightly judge the school to be good. However, they are far from complacent and aim to become an outstanding school. Already significant changes to assessment and pupil tracking systems are underway and these are enabling identification of any underachievement, so it can be remedied. Improvement since the last inspection is good and this record suggests that the capacity to continue to improve is also good.

Governors contribute well, challenging the staff to continue improving, and are involved in all aspects of the school's performance. They are providing the school with an exciting and innovative interactive website to support parents and children. The school achieves good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with broadly average standards. Their personal development is good, because they enjoy their learning and are cared for well. The school has correctly identified that, overall, children are achieving satisfactorily because of satisfactory teaching. Staff have put in place several strategies to improve the rate of progress, and these are starting to take effect. They have also recognised that boys are making less progress than

girls. Because of this, more effort is being made to engage boys in their learning. The range of activities and quality of resources are being improved in order to increase their appeal to boys. There is more rigour in the systems for assessing how much progress children are making. There is still some way to go before the school can feel totally secure of their accuracy, including having a confident picture of children's attainment on entry. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The headteacher and new deputy headteacher have already made considerable inroads into improving the provision in a relatively short space of time.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure assessment is accurate and used more rigorously to ensure that pupils are appropriately challenged in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 to eliminate any underachievement.
- Engage boys more in their learning so that they make as much progress as girls.

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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?	2
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?	3

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	1
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?	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

13 February 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of St Cross Catholic Primary School, Hoddesdon, EN11 8BN

Thank you very much for making us so welcome at your school. It was a pleasure to talk to you. A special thank you to the children we met at lunchtime, who talked about what it is like to be a pupil at your school.

You said how much you like your school. You enjoy many of your lessons and you have kind and helpful teachers. Your school gives you a good education and so you make good progress. You feel safe and cared for because the school looks after you extremely well. By the end of Year 6, you have made good progress. You are better at reading, writing and mathematics than many children in other schools. Your behaviour is excellent and you do much for the local community and beyond.

The teachers in charge of the school are leading it well. Your headteacher and all the staff are working hard to help you succeed. We have asked the teachers to make sure that the younger children are assessed accurately and given work that will challenge them. We also want the school to continue improving the lessons so that they are as interesting to boys as they are to girls. We want the boys to work even harder and make even better progress

Once again thank you for a lovely day.

Yours sincerely

Paul Cosway

Lead inspector