

St Rose's Catholic Infants School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117484
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326624
Inspection date	2 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

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	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	214
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	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr N Connor
Headteacher	Mrs B Hancock
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Green End Road Boxmoor Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP1 1QW
Telephone number	01442 398855
Fax number	01442 398835

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the use of assessment in teaching and learning, the extent of pupils' involvement in the assessment of their learning and the impact of practices on the standards that pupils reach
- how well the school is promoting community cohesion
- the extent to which the Early Years Foundation Stage has moved forward since the last inspection and how this has improved the quality and standards at the end of the stage.

Evidence was collected from observing lessons and the quality of work produced, discussions with pupils, staff, governors and pupils, and from the records of pupils' progress. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the 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

This is an average-sized school, situated in the town. Many pupils come from Catholic families and live in the five parishes that the school serves. A diversity of faiths and range of backgrounds are represented. A small number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. A much smaller than average proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational needs and a below average proportion have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most pupils are White British and their first language is English. There is two-form entry into the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children join the Nursery which has two three-hour sessions each day, when they are three. The school has recently received funding to improve the accommodation in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The school achieved Activemark in physical education in 2007 and 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which provides a very high standard of education. Pupils make excellent progress and reach high standards. The school has an excellent capacity to improve because of strong leadership and management which has brought about sustained improvement. Parents echo these judgements. One voiced the feelings of many in writing, 'My child has blossomed in this excellent school.' There is almost unanimous praise from parents for the teaching, the management of the school and the behaviour of pupils.

The starting point for pupils' high standards by the end of Year 2 is their outstanding personal development. To the school, this is fundamental to everything that it does. The first impressions of the day are of happy pupils who are delighted to come to school. This is reinforced through the day in a school where opportunities abound for them to develop as very responsible and knowledgeable young learners and citizens. Consequently their attitudes towards school and their behaviour are exemplary. The school provides a very safe and secure environment and its positive values are modelled in an ethos of care, respect and valuing of all pupils. From the time that children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, they are encouraged to take responsibility, reinforcing the emphasis the school places on being of service to others. Pupils are extremely proud to be entrusted with jobs and thrive on challenges that contribute to their outstanding preparation for junior school. This extends to pupils taking turns to express their views about school and learning to be a governor. Similarly, expectations of their learning are high.

From their slightly above average levels of knowledge and skills on entry, pupils of all levels of ability make excellent progress through the school. They reach exceptionally high standards in reading, writing and mathematics, by the end of Year 2. Those pupils who find aspects of learning more difficult, reach standards that are very close to exceptionally high compared to national expectations. For the last five years, standards have remained exceptionally high for both boys and girls although the nature of the cohorts can result in standards fluctuating a little from year to year. The consistently good and sometimes excellent quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 1 leads to pupils' outstanding progress by the end of Year 2. It is supported by teachers' accurate knowledge of the levels at which pupils are working and the very careful way in which this information is used to set work. Teachers know their subjects well and work effectively to make learning interesting and engaging. Activities are extremely well chosen to provide good challenge to them, whatever their ability. Skilful questioning of pupils helps teachers to find out how well they have remembered prior learning and the new knowledge that they have learnt. Pupils make good progress in information and communication technology, with computers integral to both teaching and learning.

Every aspect of the school's work is carefully planned. Healthy eating opportunities and pupils' excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles are reinforced in what is a good and sometimes exciting curriculum. The school's extensive links with organisations and agencies mean that learning becomes very relevant. During the inspection, for example, pupils were fascinated by the visit of the environmental officer whose machine showed that although they had all washed their hands, bacteria remained. They understand how important it is to behave safely and to adopt safe practices, both of which are promoted very well by the school through personal, social and health education. Pupils who find learning difficult are provided for well, because of a good understanding of their needs. Provision for those pupils who have a specific gift or talent is a developing aspect. A programme of off-site visits is established and, along

with lunchtime clubs and visitors, offers good enhancement of learning. Religious education is embedded in the curriculum and gives pupils an awareness and understanding of other faiths and cultures, including cultural celebrations. Further work is planned to make the curriculum more creative and to establish stronger literacy and numeracy links in other lessons.

Pupils know why attending school every day of the week is very important. It has helped to bring about a rise in attendance to above average although a number of parents still take their children on holiday during the school term. It is part of the outstanding pastoral care that the school provides which includes secure procedures and practices to help ensure pupils' health and safety. All staff training is up to date and careful records are kept of any injuries and accidents. Regular risk assessments and fire drills, which pupils understand the importance of, are in place. The school shows continued support for pupils who are troubled or ill and for their families. Although pupils are very caring and supportive towards each other, they know what to do if there is any unkindness.

The care, guidance and support of pupils are outstanding. Good relationships between parents and school help parents to support their children's learning and development well. This includes the individual education plans for pupils who need help with their learning. Intervention strategies are planned very well by the coordinator and used effectively in lessons to promote progress. Assessment of pupils' work is embedded and shows further improvement since the last inspection. End of term assessments of pupils' work which are used to track their progress, to identify any pupils who are not making the progress that they should, and to put into place any support that is needed, are significant in their contribution to the high standards that pupils attain.

Highly effective leadership and management by the headteacher and deputy headteacher are demonstrated in the rigorous monitoring of the school's work. It leads to a school improvement plan which promotes its further growth. Committed staff share the headteacher's vision and leaders at all levels strengthen the school's performance through their roles and by monitoring practices. Governors know the school well, challenge it thoroughly and are planning for further improvements next year, including more wide-ranging communication between school and home. The ethos of the uniqueness of each pupil and the school's commitment to equality is reflected in the planning and evaluation of the curriculum. It is demonstrated in the development of community cohesion, with good links in school and the community. The international dimension is being developed as integral to the school's ethos. The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved significantly since the last inspection because every aspect has been reviewed and addressed in the school's commitment to be the best that it can be.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the school with knowledge and skills that are just above average. Since the last inspection teaching has improved. Some is satisfactory but most is good. At its best, detailed planning and clear expectations support children's learning and development very well and promote good progress. Children's welfare is a top priority and staff respond sensitively to the needs of each individual so that the children are confident to approach adults. Personal development is excellent. Teachers have high expectations of children's ability to work independently. Even the youngest children confidently access writing and drawing resources which they use appropriately in cooperation with other children. All staff use good questioning

strategies to encourage children to think hard about their learning. Consequently, children speak confidently and are developing a wide vocabulary.

They get off to a good start in reading and writing because of the strong emphasis placed on teaching the relationship between letters and sounds. The outdoor area provides many exciting activities that support learning effectively. Children are particularly enjoying the opportunities for role play which the fire station and hairdresser's shop provide. There is a good balance of activities directed by adults and those chosen by the children.

Leadership and management are good and have brought about all round improvement since the last inspection. The effective developments in planning and assessment, for example, mean that staff record children's progress carefully and use assessments well to plan the next steps in their learning. The children are well prepared for their entry into the next key stage. Most children achieve standards that are above expectations.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is consistently good to enable children to make rapid progress in all aspects of their learning.

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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?	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?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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?	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?	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**

3 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Rose's Catholic Infants School, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 1QW

We enjoyed the day we spent with you recently. Thank you for showing us round your school and talking to us about the exciting things that you do and learn. We send a special thank you to those of you who had a meeting with us to tell us even more about what happens there. This letter will tell you the results of the visit that we made.

- Your school is outstanding.
- We were delighted to see that you are happy and busy, behave very, very well and treat each other kindly.
- You reach high standards by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because teaching and learning is always good in Years 1 and 2 and often outstanding. It helps you to make excellent progress.
- The teachers make learning interesting and often it is fun.
- You love using computers to help you learn and the teachers use the interactive whiteboards very well.
- You know a great deal about keeping fit and eating healthily.
- The school makes sure that you are safe and the teachers look after you very well.
- Your headteacher does an excellent job and is always looking to improve the school.

Although there has been a big improvement in the teaching and learning in the Reception and Nursery classes, we have asked your headteacher to make sure that teaching is good all of the time so that you can make quick progress in all of the things that you learn.

We hope that you enjoy your summer holidays and come back in September ready to work really hard again.

Yours faithfully

Lynne Blakelock

Lead inspector