

Saint Charles's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120212
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	327230
Inspection dates	17 June 2009
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

This inspection was carried out under Section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	126
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Anthony Foster
Headteacher	Mrs Fran Smith
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 May 2006
School address	Bosworth Road Measham Swadlincote Derbyshire DE12 7LQ
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited 12 lessons, and held meetings with the chair of governors, staff, groups of pupils and also met some parents. He observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan, school data tracking pupils' progress and documentation regarding safeguarding and health and safety requirements.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following.

- Whether pupils' progress has accelerated and is now good.
- Whether able pupils are being challenged sufficiently in mathematics.
- The effectiveness of pupils' involvement in their own assessment of their progress.

Information about the school

St Charles's is a smaller than average Catholic school which serves the locality and the Catholic parishes of Measham and Ashby de la Zouch. A very large majority of pupils are White British, the remainder representing a wide range of other ethnicities, including a small and increasing number who join from Europe who speak little or no English when they arrive. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average, though there are more with statements of special needs than usually found in a school of this size. The school has very close links with a privately run pre-school which occupies a building on the school site. This provision is inspected separately.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It is very close to becoming outstanding. Its major strengths are the quality of care provided for pupils and the school's commitment to equal opportunities. The school makes strenuous efforts to ensure that all are cared for extremely well and included. This is perhaps most noted in the way that it has made provision for those pupils recently joined from Europe. The school quickly employed a bilingual assistant whose work has been very effective, and who was observed translating for pupils during lessons so that they could understand and take part. Pupils in several classes, who are still at relatively early stages of learning English, were observed taking a full part in lessons, discussing work with their neighbours and being encouraged by them.

The outstanding care results in pupils feeling extremely safe and in their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Several parents noted this, saying such things as, 'Children are actively encouraged to look after each other.' Pupils have a very keen awareness of the effect of their actions and of their place in society and their responsibilities towards it. This results in their excellent behaviour. Pupils respect diversity and enjoy the opportunities to study a range of cultures. It says much that, with the small numbers of pupils from other ethnicities, the school has not recorded a racial incident in over 10 years.

Data show that, in the recent past, pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 2, were making satisfactory progress. However, the school has taken strong and sustained action and pupils are now making good progress through the school. A particular improvement has been in writing, which has been a recent focus and where standards have almost caught up those in reading. Boys' standards in writing have improved particularly well as this had been identified as a weakness by leaders. The focus is now shifting to mathematics, where some more-able pupils do not achieve as highly as they could.

The success of this action to improve standards in writing is a good indicator of the school's capacity to improve. Further indicators are that all staff and governors share a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and there are clear plans in place for further improvement. In particular, there is a powerful drive and ambition to continue improvement, which is communicated extremely well and shared by all involved in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the numbers attaining the higher levels in the national tests in mathematics, particularly in Year 2, by:
 - ensuring that the introductions to lessons are better matched to the full range of pupils' ages and abilities
 - consistently providing higher levels of challenge for the more able.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils are learning well and making good progress. Lessons are typified by high levels of concentration and pupils working keenly and enthusiastically. They are given many opportunities to discuss their work with a partner and this helps them to be involved and engaged. They are also provided with a good range of interesting activities in lessons, which they enjoy. Several said, when asked to say the best thing about their school, that 'teachers make lessons fun'. All groups of pupils are making good progress. This is particularly the case for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who have very clear plans made for their learning. Some of these pupils, as well as some who are at early stages of learning English, make exceptional progress due to the high quality of support provided for them. A contributory factor in pupils' progress is the way that they are expected to assess the quality of their own learning. Generally, pupils achieve well and thoroughly enjoy their school experience. As a parent said, 'Our child can't stop smiling and gets up every morning happy, runs to school and brings home only good memories.' Despite the school's best efforts, a few families find it difficult to get their children to school on time, which is why attendance is satisfactory.

Standards in the national tests in Year 6 have been broadly average in English, mathematics and science for some years, though there is a rising trend. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to continue the improvement, though standards are still likely to be broadly average by the time they leave. Earlier in their school careers, these pupils were working at below average levels, so they have made good progress. Overall standards are also depressed because some pupils taking the tests have not mastered English to a level sufficient to fully understand the tests.

Not only do pupils feel extremely safe in school, but they have a very keen awareness of what might constitute an unsafe situation outside school. They are very well aware of potential dangers when using the internet for example. Although pupils have very good knowledge of the components of a healthy lifestyle, too many do not carry this through to their daily lives, bringing in unhealthy snacks for instance. Pupils are very involved in the life of the church and make a good contribution to the local community. The school council has an effective voice and for example, organised a sponsored walk to raise funds for dustbins for the playground. Pupils carry out a variety of tasks around the school, the well-trained play coaches being appreciated by the younger children. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to extend pupils' range of responsibilities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

The key reason for pupils' good progress is good teaching. Teachers organise their classes well and provide a good range of interesting activities to aid pupils' learning. They make good use of technology, such as interactive whiteboards to retain pupils' interest. Although they provide different activities to suit the range of abilities in their classes, there are times, particularly in mathematics, when the more able do not start with sufficiently challenging work, having to complete other tasks first. There are also occasions when the introductions to lessons do not match the range of ages and abilities of the class. A particular strength is the way that teachers use *talk partners* so that pupils have opportunities to discuss their work and learn from each other. The school collects a good range of data to measure pupils' progress. This is used very effectively to identify those in need of extra support and good strategies are used to help them catch up. Very clear targets are set for pupils' future learning, though teachers do not always refer to these when they mark their work.

The curriculum supports pupils' learning well. It has been designed effectively to meet their interests, though developments on this continue. Events such as the cultural weeks, where the school focuses on other cultures such as India, are much enjoyed and add to pupils' cultural understanding. Good provision is made for pupils' personal, social and health education and the school holds an annual citizenship week to broaden pupils' perspective. Good links are made between subjects to bring greater relevance to pupils' learning and these are being further developed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

There is an extremely clear focus amongst the school community and a shared determination to continuing improvement. This extends to all staff, governors and parents. Very challenging targets are set for pupils' progress and the fact that these targets are almost always met is indicative of the success of leadership and management. A particular strength is the way that data and other evidence is analysed to identify areas for development. This is extremely thorough and leads to very specific plans for improvement.

The school recognises that education is a partnership between home and school and has worked exceptionally hard to involve and support parents. The proof of the success of this are the extremely positive views expressed by parents spoken to and in their questionnaire responses. The school carries out regular surveys of parents and pupils, and parents say that it acts swiftly and effectively if concerns are expressed. This is just another factor in the recognition that all are equal and to be equally valued, which has an exceedingly high priority.

Governors are very supportive and their role is developing well. They are self-evaluative and keen to improve their involvement. They have regular strategic meetings, which focus on particular aspects of school development. At the time of the inspection all safeguarding and health and safety requirements were met. Thorough risk assessments are routinely carried out.

The promotion of community cohesion is strong as far as the local community is concerned. The school has evaluated this aspect well and is aware of where improvements need to be made. For instance, work is planned to promote awareness of the global community and to further enhance pupils' understanding of the United Kingdom community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2
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Early Years Foundation Stage

Very good induction procedures and close links with the adjacent pre-school, from which many children come, mean that children settle quickly. A parent put it well when they said, 'Our child settled in impressively quickly due to the caring, supportive environment and clear structure.' Provision for children's welfare is excellent and they make impressive gains in their personal, social and emotional development.

Children join the school with levels of skills and knowledge generally in line with those expected. This is a change since the last inspection when these skills were below those levels expected. They make good progress during their time in Reception and, by the time they join Year 1, they have reached above average standards overall. However, these standards are not consistent and in some areas of learning, writing, creative development and numbers as labels for counting for instance, they are average. The dip in creative development was recognised by leaders and effective steps have been made to address this. Good progress has been made in phonics, where the school has supported the pre-school in using a common scheme.

A good range of focused activities is planned for these children. For instance, they enjoyed being archaeologists and digging up coins from the sand in work to recognise money. There is a good balance of activities led by an adult and those which children choose for themselves. Adults assess their gains in knowledge and understanding regularly and these assessments are used effectively to plan next steps in learning.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who returned the questionnaires, and those spoken to, were overwhelmingly positive about the school. They particularly appreciate the care provided for their children and said such things as: 'This is a safe and happy school where everyone cares and puts the children first.' Parents also liked the way that the school deals very effectively with any problems and takes account of their suggestions and concerns. One summed up the school very well when they said, 'What unites the school and binds it together is its sense of family and Catholic ethos.' No significant concerns were expressed.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Saint Charles's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspector received 40 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 89 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	8	0	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



18 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Charles's Catholic Primary School, Measham, DE12 7LQ

Thank you so much for your welcome when I visited recently. I very much enjoyed talking to many of you and hearing how much you enjoy school. I am not surprised that you enjoy it so much as it is a good school and close to becoming outstanding. I particularly enjoyed talking to some of you about your work on *The Jabberwocky* and doing some research into *galumphing*¹!

These are the best things I found about your school.

- You behave exceptionally well and are developing into extremely responsible and caring young people. In particular, you all get along very well together and make sure that those who are different are accepted and can take part in everything.
- You told me that you feel very safe in school. This is because all adults look after you extremely well.
- You are making good progress as you are being taught well.
- A good range of things are planned for you to learn, which you told me you really enjoy. I was particularly impressed with the cultural weeks.
- You make a good start in Reception and settle quickly because the adults make every effort to help you.
- Your headteacher, all staff and governors have very good plans to make your school even better.

I have suggested one thing that could help you make even better progress.

- Some of you could be working at higher levels in mathematics. You need to be given more difficult work more often and not have to do the same as everyone else.

I know you will help the school make that small jump to being outstanding by continuing to work hard and helping your teachers.

Yours faithfully

John D Eadie
Lead inspector

¹ If you don't know what this means in our language today, try looking it up in a dictionary.

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