

Bishop Ellis Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120218
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	327233
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Ian Hodgkinson

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	313
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sarah Brett
Headteacher	Ms Gail Neill
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 July 2006
School address	Barkby Thorpe Lane Thurmaston Leicester LE4 8GP
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 18 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, parents and pupils. They observed the school's work. They looked at documentation including pupils' books, the school development plan, minutes of the governing body, records of assessment and tracking of students' progress, plans and monitoring information for the support of vulnerable students, records of the school's monitoring of teaching and learning, records of the school's arrangements for the safeguarding and protection of students, policies and procedures for promoting equality and countering discrimination, and 108 parental questionnaire responses.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress pupils make across Key Stage 2
- differences in rates of progress between different groups of pupils
- the impact of strategies to improve communication, language and literacy in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This large school draws its pupils widely from Leicester and its surrounding area. The large majority of pupils are from Catholic families, with a third from families of other denominations or faiths. A higher than average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. None is at an early stage of learning English. Fewer pupils than average are entitled to a free school meal. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, but an average proportion have a statement of special educational needs. Most have specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, or speech, language and communication disorders. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made in two 'Four Plus' classes. A before- and after-school club operates on the school site and is managed by a local nursery. The school gained the Healthy Schools Award in 2006.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Pupils are admirably well behaved, and this supports excellent learning in the classroom and a high degree of mutual respect between pupils and adults. The warm relationships that permeate the school help pupils to feel very safe and secure. The outstanding care, guidance and support they receive inspire them with confidence. In the words of one pupil, 'if there is a problem, it'll be sorted out.' Excellent attendance rates are testimony to how much the pupils love coming to school. 'My child never wants to be away from school; she loves it and is making fabulous progress in all areas', said one parent, echoing the views of many others. Pupils strongly develop skills which will equip them very well for later life. They listen very carefully to instructions, are highly cooperative when they work together, and are confident in articulating their views and making their opinions known. They use such skills to make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community, whether as highly effective school councillors, 'playground buddies' or through enterprising fundraising activities. Pupils have a high level of awareness of the diversity of faiths, cultures and backgrounds in the United Kingdom and overseas. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.

Pupils' outstanding academic achievement is driven by excellent teaching. Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By Year 6, their attainment is above average overall, and very high for girls. Attainment in Year 6 national tests is very high in English and mathematics at the higher Level 5. This reflects the very strong progress of higher attaining pupils, who are continually challenged by their teachers in class with probing questions and engaging activities. Teachers, working closely with learning support assistants, plan in great detail to ensure that activities are well designed to move pupils of all abilities swiftly ahead in their learning. Assessment of pupils' work is very detailed and highly constructive in giving pupils clear direction about how they can improve. Pupils clearly understand their individual targets, and make careful use of them. They are confident in critically evaluating their own work and that of their peers against clear success criteria. Staff use of assessment information to inform the planning of activities is, however, not quite as well developed in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The school has been ahead of its time in devising an excellent curriculum which effectively promotes pupils' skills and understanding by making interesting links between subjects and themes. There are many curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to develop their excellent understanding of how to live a

healthy lifestyle, and the school council's high profile campaign on this issue has made a sizeable impact on pupils' thinking.

The school's outstanding leadership maintains its strong ethos and values while setting high expectations for improvements in standards. Under the clear direction of the headteacher, the staff work as a highly cohesive and effective team. As a consequence, excellent progress has been made on the key issues from the previous inspection. Writing standards have risen very strongly, and the school has developed excellent links with partner schools locally and organisations overseas to make a powerful contribution to community cohesion. Successes like these, together with a rigorous and comprehensive self-evaluation of why science standards have lagged behind those in English and mathematics, provide clear evidence of the school's outstanding capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of provision from good to outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - sharpening the staff's use of assessment and target setting to inform the planning of activities for children
 - planning activities which consistently build on and extend children's existing skills.
- Raise pupils' attainment and progress in science, particularly in scientific enquiry, by:
 - improving opportunities for pupils to apply their number skills in science
 - improving pupils' competence in the use of technical and scientific vocabulary.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' excellent attitudes secure their outstanding learning and progress. The very strong progress pupils make across Key Stage 2 is shown both in their excellent learning in class and their success in reaching or exceeding the levels expected of them by Year 6. Learning proceeds at a fast pace because pupils are very clear about the purpose of their activities and sharply aware of what they need to focus on to raise the quality of their work. Pupils develop excellent evaluative skills which help them recognise how to improve. Teachers in Year 4, for example, made excellent use of a 'visualiser', a digital presentation tool, to share pupils' handwritten work on screen and enable the class to talk constructively about the strengths and weaknesses of the writing. Higher attainers respond to such challenge particularly well. While girls' attainment is very strong, boys also learn very well in lessons, where activities are well designed to promote enjoyment and capture interest. A very energetic Year 1-2 mathematics lesson, for example, saw teams of pupils racing around the playground to sort numbers according to their multiple values. Attainment and progress in science have not risen in line with English and mathematics because of some shortcomings in pupils' skills of scientific enquiry, particularly in applying number to solve problems, and in their use of scientific and

technical vocabulary.

Pupils develop maturity and confidence in working with each other and with adults. They actively organise their own clubs and games in the playground, and the 'playground buddies' are very effective in helping to ensure that everyone is included. The school council's healthy living drive has led it to run its own tuck shop, selling a range of fruit and healthy snacks. Such activities, together with pupils' strong development of basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), ensure that they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils develop a strong awareness of how to live safely and healthily. In this respect, they greatly value their experiences on the Life Education mobile classroom, which features as part of a strong programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' excellent classroom management establishes a very positive climate for learning. Lessons are typically extremely well organised to ensure very purposeful learning throughout. Pupils' work is very carefully assessed and their progress monitored so that teachers are able to set, in English in particular, very clear and highly effective individual targets for pupils. Assessment information is exceptionally well used in Years 1 to 6 to match work to pupils' abilities. Higher attainers therefore receive a strong degree of challenge, while for those who need more support, work is very well structured to guide them through the activities. The care, guidance and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are excellent, enabling many of these pupils to make exceptional progress. Individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very specific, enabling teachers and learning support assistants to fully meet their needs. In the Early Years

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

Foundation Stage, children's progress is also carefully assessed but the information is not as consistently well used to plan activities which build on children's knowledge and skills.

The curriculum makes a very strong contribution to pupils' great enjoyment of school. Activities are rich and varied, and curricular and extra-curricular activities are enhanced by many trips and visits. The school works closely with partner schools and other organisations to broaden learning opportunities and safeguard the well-being of its pupils. Links with an inner-city, mainly Muslim, school have very successfully deepened pupils' understanding of cultural, faith and socio-economic diversity. Links with local secondary schools help to bring in specialist resources to the school and promote smooth transition for pupils when they leave.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, ably supported by her deputy headteacher, maintains a determined focus on improving quality and standards while preserving the school's strong ethos which is so much valued by the school community. Rigorous self-evaluation ensures that the school takes prompt and effective action where weaknesses are identified. The school responds transparently to the findings of regular surveys of the opinions of parents and pupils. The headteacher distributes leadership widely among staff and is highly supportive of those new to roles. Strong teamwork among staff underpins the very high quality of planning which leads to such excellent teaching and learning. Peer coaching arrangements are highly successful in helping staff to share ideas about best practice. The school's high profile role in an initial teacher training consortium is a mark of its commitment to the professional development of staff, and secures important resources and expertise. Outstanding governance helps to ensure that resources are very well deployed. Governors regularly review and update policies and this does much to ensure that pupils' safety and well-being is accorded a high priority. At the time of the inspection, safeguarding requirements were met.

The school knows its community well, and has taken many positive steps to promote community cohesion by forging links with schools and other organisations across the UK and overseas. Parents of children of other denominations and faiths represented in the school speak warmly of the school's welcoming and inclusive approach. Detailed and vigilant monitoring of the performance and welfare of individuals and groups of pupils ensures equality of opportunity for all.

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	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the 'Four Plus' classes with skills which are broadly in line with those expected for their age, but with weak skills in communication, language and literacy. There is therefore an appropriately strong focus on developing early reading and writing skills, so that children are able to enjoy many successful opportunities to practise and experiment using letters and sounds. They are also encouraged to speak confidently and listen carefully. Children make good progress to bring these skills to a broadly average standard by the time they join Year 1. Teaching is good and activities are mostly well planned. However, assessment information is not consistently used as well in Four Plus as in the rest of the school to help children build on their existing skills and knowledge. Activities such as role play are not always linked clearly to a theme to extend learning. Nonetheless, there is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities, and the outdoor environment is well used for learning. Activities are well designed to engage children's interests, and staff make effective use of ICT to develop children's understanding. Good leadership and management have led to a thorough and effective overhaul of the curriculum as a result of some previously identified shortcomings. There are very good partnerships with parents, who are kept well informed of children's progress. Children are very well cared for, and procedures to safeguard their well-being are excellent.

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 are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They speak very highly of its warm and welcoming ethos, and nearly all are very pleased with the progress made by their children. Many who wrote comments on the questionnaire praised the approachability of the staff and the very rapid response of the school to any problems or concerns. A few parents were concerned about mixed age classes in Years 1 and 2, especially when children moved up from Four Plus. Inspectors found, however, that teachers' planning of work in these classes took full account of pupils' different abilities and maturity. Early in Year 1, pupils are still able to use the Four Plus outdoor area to maintain some continuity in the approach to learning. A very few parents were concerned that there was no modern language provision at the school. Inspectors found that firm plans are in place to start this in September 2009.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bishop Ellis 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 inspection team received 108 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 438 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	81	35	4	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.

8 May 2009



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bishop Ellis Catholic Primary School, Leicester LE4 8GP

Many thanks for the welcome you gave to me and my colleagues when we visited the school for its recent inspection. We greatly enjoyed seeing you at work and at play, and valued the time you gave to us in discussions. You are very confident in speaking up and making your opinions heard. That is a really important skill and it is excellent to see the ways in which the school helps you to develop this.

The inspection judges the school to be outstanding. It is clear that you and your parents are very happy with the excellent way in which you are taught and the great care the school takes for your safety and welfare. Your behaviour in class and around the school is outstanding and means that everyone in class can get on with their learning. As a result, you make excellent progress, and reach standards in your work which are above average by the time you finish Year 6. Many of you make particularly good progress to get up to Level 5 by that time.

The way the teachers show you how to improve your work and your willingness to follow their guidance is outstanding. This has led to the progress you make in English and mathematics rising quickly over recent years.

The headteacher, governors and other leaders in the school do an excellent job in making sure that the school continues to improve. There are two areas on which to focus to make things even better:

- continue to make improvements in Four Plus to ensure that children are always developing their skills
- raise standards in science to keep pace with the improvements made in English and mathematics.

Of course, you can help by continuing to work hard and keeping up your excellent attendance records.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson
Lead inspector

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