

St Amand's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123224
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	327871
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Nicola Davies

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)	133
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 S McCarthy
Headteacher	Mr J G Laverty
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	St Mary's Road East Hendred Wantage OX12 8LF

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2009
Inspection number	327871

Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school in the village of East Hendred with Reception-aged children who make up the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are five classes, each made up of pupils from two year groups. The school serves three local parishes and draws its pupils from a wide geographical area. Most pupils are of White British or Irish heritage. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the proportion eligible for free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Amand's provides its happy pupils with a satisfactory quality of education. Pupils are polite, courteous and respond positively to the safe and caring ethos provided by staff. Parents spoke approvingly of the care and concern shown to individual pupils. As one parent noted, 'There is a warm, family atmosphere which really helps my child'. Pupils and parents appreciate the many and varied sporting and musical activities on offer at the school and in particular appreciate the 'extra mile' that the headteacher and the deputy go in organising these enrichment opportunities. Most children enjoy sport and learn a musical instrument and these high levels of participation and enjoyment are a strong aspect of the satisfactory curriculum and contribute well to pupils' good adoption of healthy lifestyles. Similarly, the strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural ethos of the school secures pupils' good levels of personal development and well-being. This means that pupils leave as mature young people with strong views which they express with confidence and clarity. Although most pupils behave very well, parents and pupils are not pleased with the instances of poorer behaviour which do occur. A few parents are not clear how these are managed and this is one example of shortcomings in the way that the school communicates with parents.

Attainment by the end of Year 6 is in line with or above national averages and achievement is satisfactory. Although nearly all pupils make expected progress, some could achieve more. The quality of teaching and progress is satisfactory overall. Older pupils benefit from some very good teaching and opportunities to get involved in assessing their own learning but this is not consistently the case. The tracking of pupils' progress has improved significantly since the previous inspection and assessment over time is now thorough and shared well. However, teachers do not always use assessment information well to help them meet the differing needs of pupils in their mixed-age classes, particularly in mathematics.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's strengths and the challenges it faces and provide the school with its satisfactory capacity to improve. For example, through its improved tracking, the school has correctly identified that progress in mathematics, while satisfactory, could be better. Leaders and managers, including governors, have worked well as a team to develop and implement a well-considered plan to address this. This has already had an impact but there is more to be done to strengthen the day-to-day monitoring of teaching and learning to support the school's longer-term aims.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children generally have the expected skills for their age when they join St Amand's and make satisfactory progress during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are well cared for and develop good relationships with adults and with other children. Since the last inspection, the indoor and outdoor facilities have been significantly improved and children have a wide range of opportunities to learn through play and through more formal activities led by adults, both indoors and outdoors. The outdoor space has been extended and staff provide some good activities to encourage children to build on their learning with adults through their play. For example, children were captivated by the opportunity to use sand and straw in the outside area to act out the story of the Three Little Pigs. This led to some very good learning and thoughtful discussion between children about the properties of cement and straw. Staff have rightly

highlighted the benefits of developing this indoor/outdoor approach to themes and activities further, although this work is at an early stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning by better day-to-day monitoring and evaluation.
- Ensure teaching meets the differing needs of pupils well, particularly in mathematics.
- Improve communication with parents, particularly concerning behaviour.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards at the end of Year 6 are generally a little above average and most pupils make expected progress overall. The school is aware that its next steps are to ensure that most pupils make good progress. Ensuring that progress in mathematics is good for all pupils has been a major focus of the school's work this year, and this has already met with some success. For example, a higher proportion of the current Year 6 are already working at higher levels in the subject than was the case last year. There are no significant differences between the achievements of different groups of pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make expected progress and suitable systems are in place to identify and support pupils at risk of underachieving.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good gains in their personal well-being and in their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. They are happy to come to school, attend regularly and feel safe. Pupils contribute well to the school and local community, for example looking after younger pupils, serving each other at lunchtimes or organising fundraising events – such as sponsoring one of their teachers to work with schools in Uganda. They are enthusiastic about their responsibilities but rightly feel that the school could make more of their contributions. 'We talk a lot and don't always do a lot' was their verdict on the role of the school council. The strong moral and spiritual code of the school means that they learn to appreciate differences and similarities between people and it influences their strong views about how to improve their school. For example, while they understand that some pupils have more difficulty in behaving well, they are unanimous in believing that all pupils should show respect to all adults. Such attitudes, along with their basic skills, prepare them well for their future lives. However, they are not always given as much responsibility as their mature attitudes warrant. Pupils have a good understanding of being healthy and take good advantage of the many opportunities they have to develop their physical fitness. Their highly sociable lunchtimes mean they develop a good awareness of food and its link to healthy lifestyles, as well as a good awareness of the differing needs and strengths of younger and older pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The vast majority of pupils have good attitudes to learning which means that they generally work hard and enjoy lessons. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to achieve in lessons and explain this well. Teachers' assessment of pupils' learning and progress over time in reading, writing and mathematics is thorough. Staff use this information well to identify pupils who need extra support programmes. However, planning to meet the different needs of pupils within class lessons on a day-to-day basis is weaker. The objectives for small group work are not always sufficiently exact nor related clearly enough to the needs of the particular group. Therefore, although pupils benefit from their close interaction with adults, group work is not always pitched at exactly the right level. There are some very good examples of feedback to pupils through assessment in lessons and marking. This is not yet consistent across the school and, as a result, not all pupils know what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Music, physical education and the range of clubs and extra-curricular activities are strengths of the curriculum and encourage a high level of pupil participation. A well-run after school club provides additional opportunities for relaxation, exercise and learning at the end of the day. Provision for information and communication technology has improved since the last inspection. All classes now have interactive whiteboards and these have been used well to heighten pupils' interest. The curriculum for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is strong. For example, the school has been involved in a three-year project with schools in Spain and Poland which has led to much learning about different cultures and lifestyles. Pupils learn French and the school is currently pursuing links with a school in France.

While the curriculum is broad and covers all subjects, the school has rightly recognised that it sometimes lacks the sparkle necessary to enthuse pupils. As a result, a new initiative has been put in place where pupils from across all year groups work together on themed activities. Although still in its early days, this initiative has met with approval from pupils and their parents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There are good systems to care for pupils. Child protection arrangements are thorough and effective systems are in place to support pupils experiencing difficulties with their work. The school makes good use of its links with outside agencies and extra programmes for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well established and monitored. Systems for guidance are satisfactory. Parents are regularly informed on how well their child is doing but opportunities to involve pupils in assessment are missed. The school's system for reporting and recording poor behaviour is not consistent and sanctions are therefore not always clear to pupils or their parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has provided a clear steer to the school for many years and is well respected by parents, pupils and staff. Systems for tracking pupils' progress put in place since the last inspection allow governors and senior leaders to have a good understanding of strengths and areas for development. This enables them to set and achieve targets for improvement. Staff have a good understanding of the school and its place in the local community and its contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. Over the past year, the headteacher has rightly extended opportunities for staff and governors to get involved in monitoring and accounting for standards and progress. However, some of this work is in its early stages and so information from regular assessments is not yet consistently matched to what is happening in the classroom.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

31 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Amand's Catholic Primary School, Wantage, OX12 8LF

Thank you so much for helping me with the inspection of your school. I was really interested to meet so many of you and to hear all your views. I agree with the staff and governors at your school that the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. The hard-working staff ensure that you are happy and well cared for. The attention they pay to you as individuals and the strong moral guidance they provide are two of the things your parents really appreciate about the school. This helps you develop into the very mature young people you become. Some of your parents think that behaviour should be better, and you mentioned this too. I have asked the school to improve the way it keeps parents informed, including being clearer about how instances of poorer behaviour are managed.

Nearly all of you make the progress you should, but your teachers know that some of you could achieve more. They are working on this and have already made a difference to the progress you make in mathematics. The information they regularly collect about your progress helps them but I have asked them to keep a closer eye on your day-to-day work in the classroom. This will mean they can help each other to help all of you make good progress. In particular, I have asked them to think about how they manage your work in groups so that work is at just the right level for you. This is often quite tricky for teachers and the 'traffic light' system that some of you use is one way that you can help.

It was great to hear all the ideas you have for the school. I enjoyed watching some of you start planning for a pond in your school grounds. You are such an enthusiastic and mature group of pupils, I am sure your ideas will be very helpful to St Amand's in the future.

Yours faithfully

Nicola Davies

Lead Inspector