

St Dunstan's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125238
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	328321
Inspection date	28 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Christopher Gray

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)	418
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	Mr John FitzGerald
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Newling-Ward
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Onslow Crescent Woking GU22 7AX
Telephone number	01483 715 190

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	28 January 2009
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Fax number

01483 722 866

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how well pupils progress in writing and mathematics
- the impact of leaders and managers at all levels on raising pupils' attainment and how assessment is used in this process
- the outstanding features of pupils' personal development.

They gathered evidence from records of pupils' attainment, samples of pupils' past work, observations in lessons and around the school, meetings with staff, governors and pupils and an analysis of responses to the parents' questionnaire. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. An average proportion of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds, but the proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average. A smaller than average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties, though the proportion with statements of educational need is average. The largest group has specific learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils entitled to receive free school meals is much lower than average. The school runs a Nursery called Stepping Stones for 48 Early Years Foundation Stage children aged three and four; the school also runs provision for before and after school care, open to all the school's pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils achieve well. It has outstanding features in pupils' personal development and the curriculum. The school has forged excellent partnerships with parents, schools in Surrey and abroad and with the local community. These strengths are summed up by the parent who wrote, 'We feel there is a genuine partnership between teachers, pupils and parents at this school. Children are nurtured and instilled with values such as respect, tolerance, faith, and a sense of justice and community.'

Pupils begin in Year 1 with skills that are a little above the national average in most areas. Standards by Year 2 have been above average for a number of years; they fell to average levels in 2008. This was because of a larger than usual number of pupils with English as an additional language. Nonetheless, pupils made good progress. Standards in Year 6 were significantly above average overall in 2008, though lower in English for the first time in recent years. The school recognises that standards in pupils' writing are not as good as they could be and has introduced a comprehensive action plan to raise standards. Work began on this in September, but it is too early to see its impact on standards. Results in mathematics have risen in recent years as a result of action taken following the last inspection. This shows that the school has good capacity to make further improvements.

Pupils' outstanding personal development is demonstrated by thoughtful responses to searching questions. For example, when asked what pupils had learnt from personal, social and health education, one replied that charitable giving 'makes me feel humble and not selfish'. 'When you have food you don't like', said another, 'don't argue about it because some people have no food.' Behaviour is excellent. Pupils have high expectations of how they should behave and are very critical of any who don't behave well. But, they say, the sanctions always work. Their understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives is outstanding. Attendance is above average, but is kept from being higher by a small number of parents who take trips abroad in term-time. The above-average standards of basic skills help prepare pupils well for the next stage in their education.

The outstanding curriculum contributes significantly to pupils' enjoyment and personal development. Subjects link together well and topics are enriched by visits to places of interest. The school has received the International School Award and works regularly with two schools in Africa, in academic work as well as in supporting them through fund-raising. A regular feature of topics is the opportunity provided for pupils to review what they have enjoyed, and to consider what might have been different. These views are taken into account in reviewing the topic for future use.

Teaching is good and leads to pupils' good progress. Lessons are interesting and engage pupils' enthusiasm and conscientiousness, as can be seen in their written work, where the drive to make good use of writing in many subjects is obvious. The school's pastoral care is excellent. Child protection procedures are robust and the school provides a secure family base, extended by the strong links with the new church across the road. New before and after school clubs provide welcome extra care for those who want it. Academic guidance needs strengthening. Pupils have new target books but are not yet sufficiently involved in the process of assessing and improving their own learning. They are not aware of the National Curriculum levels they have reached and so cannot explain how they might reach the next level. This slows their progress.

Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders have a clear view of where the school needs to improve, as in the current drive to raise standards in writing. This shows the effectiveness of self-evaluation. The school has made changes to the process of target-setting and are tracking the progress of pupils on a half-termly basis. However, there is scope for more challenging targets to be set for all pupils and not just some. Tracking focuses on those who have made most or least progress. Specific support is planned for some of those in between; however, more rigorous checks, overseen by senior leaders, need to be carried out to ensure that the needs of all those in the middle are met. Governors are involved in determining the school's future through the new Strategy Group. Governors' committees mirror the new senior leadership structure, to facilitate keeping a close watch on the progress of issues in the school's development plan.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Stepping Stones Nursery at the age of three with skills that are a little above those expected for their age. They make good progress because of good teaching and improve their standards well by the time they leave, especially in personal, social and emotional development. Those learning to speak English receive good support from staff. The quality of pastoral support given to the children is outstanding. The new building is bright and attractive and well resourced, so that children quickly become absorbed in their well-planned activities. In one lesson children were so busy with their activities that not one wanted to stop for snack time. Staff make frequent observations on children's development and learning, which are fed each week into 'enhanced provision' for each child. Good leadership and management ensure that the process is smooth and effective. The leader intends to make self-evaluations more frequently. Many parents wrote in praise of the work done by staff, with comments such as, 'Our daughter looks forward to and thoroughly enjoys each day at Nursery. Through newsletters and notice boards, parents are kept well informed of the activities.'

About one third of the school's Reception children come from the Stepping Stones Nursery. The attainment on entry of most children is above what is expected for their age. Teaching is good and is effectively planned to contain a good balance of activities directed by the teacher and free choice for the children, often without the children's knowing which is which. Resources are very good and lead to much enjoyment and involvement by the children. Many children reach the higher levels in aspects of Early Years Foundation Stage learning, especially in activities connected with letters and numbers. They learn to express themselves and to play and share well. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed, and frequent observations of children's learning are very effectively fed back into the next day's planning. The quality of care is outstanding, as witnessed by the parent who noted, 'Our son has settled into school really well - loves going.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the action plan to raise standards in writing.
- Apply greater rigour to the processes of target-setting and tracking pupils' progress, including giving pupils a clearer understanding of their next steps.

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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?	1
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?	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?	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?	1
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	3
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**

10 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Dunstan's Catholic Primary School, Woking, GU22 7AX

We were pleased to meet so many of you when we visited your school on a very wet day at the end of January. Thank you all for the very polite and friendly welcome you gave us.

You go to a good school, of which you, your parents and teachers are rightly proud. Your personal development is outstanding. Adults look after you really well and help you grow into caring and considerate young people. This was clear when both of us met groups of pupils to discuss what you enjoy about your learning. We could see how lessons such as personal, social and health education are making you thoughtful. You enjoy taking responsibilities in school and the many extra activities you are given. You know your 'I can' statements, though you are not always told what steps to take to reach higher levels in your work. You reach above-average standards by the time you leave, but results in writing are not as high as those in reading, mathematics and science. We have asked the school to carry on with its plans to help you reach higher levels in writing.

You enjoy your lessons because teachers make them interesting and connect subjects together, as when Year 6 pupils were working on metaphors for an avalanche. Teachers track your progress on a regular basis and set targets. We have asked them to make some of these more challenging and to share them with you.

The youngest children in the school and in Stepping Stones Nursery make a good start to their education. It was good to see them working and playing outside, despite the awful weather.

I hope you continue to enjoy your time at St Dunstan's.

Yours faithfully

Christopher Gray

Lead Inspector