

St Catherine's Hoddesdon CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133773
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	328761
Inspection date	12 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Roderick Passant

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 controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	310
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	Jo Smith
Headteacher	Mr Wayne Howsen
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Haslewood Avenue Hoddesdon Hertfordshire EN11 8HT
Telephone number	01992 463214

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	12 February 2009
Inspection number	328761

Fax number

01992 447251

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	12 February 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and aspects of achievement and standards, pupils' personal development and leadership and management. Inspectors gathered evidence from the school's self-evaluation, lesson observations, other school documentation, discussions with the senior leadership team, governors and pupils, and an analysis of parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but 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

The school is above average in size and serves the central area of the town of Hoddesdon. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is close to average. About 15% of pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, including a number who are from Traveller communities. A small number of pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below average, although the proportion with statements of special educational needs is average.

The school has gained a number of awards in recognition of its work, namely: Healthy Schools, Hertfordshire Quality Standards for Early Years Foundation Stage, and Activemark for the quality of its physical education and sports programme. The school operates breakfast, after school and holiday schemes as well as a family support programme. A private nursery that is not managed by the school governors operates on the school site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'School is a fun place to learn', 'it gives you an experience you will never forget', were how two pupils summed up the strengths of their school. They are evidently and justifiably proud of this good school. Pupils' pride in their school is an important element binding together the St Catherine's community. The overwhelming majority of parents are very supportive. Many wrote in warm terms about their children's enthusiasm for school, the progress they make, the richness of the curriculum and the good care and support they receive. They are especially complimentary about the enthusiasm, presence and approachability of the headteacher.

Pupils achieve well. Historically, standards at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science have been above average. Unvalidated data for the 2008 tests indicates that standards remained above average, with improvements in English. The proportion of pupils gaining the upper levels in mathematics dropped, but staff have already identified and put in place approaches to challenge higher attaining pupils more in this subject. Standards in writing have improved since they became a focus for the school. Strategies such as 'Reading Champions' and friendly competition between classes regarding the numbers of pupils who read at home to a parent or carer promote a strong reading culture. The current Year 6 are making good progress to meet challenging targets. Pupils from minority ethnic groups do equally well. The senior leadership team has responded effectively to the 2008 data, which showed that results in Year 2 dipped to below average. The strategies they have put in place for the current Year 2 classes and for Year 3 have ensured that these pupils are now making good progress. Teaching is good, and the headteacher has a very accurate view of its quality. Teachers are skilled practitioners who manage their classrooms effectively. A combination of good subject knowledge and the creative use of interactive whiteboards capture pupils' interests. Strong teamwork between enthusiastic teachers and skilful teaching assistants ensures that individuals and groups of pupils who require additional support make good progress.

Pupils' personal development is excellent. This is a result of the outstanding care, guidance and support they receive and the effective promotion of a strong sense of community. By Year 6, pupils are mature, confident, well-behaved, courteous young people. During their time in school, pupils absorb the clear values the school consistently promotes. They clearly enjoy school and this is reflected in the good attendance of almost all pupils. They feel safe in school and on trips and have a good understanding of how to look after themselves, for instance when using the internet. They also feel safe because the school is very friendly and pupils get on well with one another. This stems from the warmth of the relationships and mutual respect between adults and pupils. Pupils say there is no bullying, although they admit sometimes that pupils fall out with each other. There are few racist incidents because staff teach pupils to value the differences in people. Teachers develop pupils' cultural awareness well during themed weeks and by using the school's international links. Assemblies provide powerful contexts in which the school's community values, particularly respect for others, are promoted and shared. Pupils know that teachers are kind, encourage them to ask questions and provide them with support. Crucially, they understand that their peers will not ridicule them, so they are not frightened of making a mistake. Pupils behave well and behaviour improves as they get older. This happens because adults manage behaviour positively, reinforcing what pupils do well, rather than emphasising what they are not doing well. The school has a very positive ethos, because praise is targeted to named individuals who merit it. Adults recognise the importance of fun and play

in pupils' learning, which strengthens the academic ethos. For example, the lesson where pupils counted and sorted sweets captured their interest about averages in a memorable way.

Pupils believe their opinions count. The school and class councils have made significant improvements to the school. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school community and take their roles and responsibilities very seriously. The overriding impression, gained from the way that adults always refer to pupils by name, is that pupils are recognised and valued as individuals. This active fostering of pupils' self-esteem is a very powerful feature of the school and a positive spur to learning. As one pupil said, 'It's a school where you can do things you are proud of.' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle. Their excellent attitudes, social maturity and good academic skills provide an extremely good foundation for their next steps in education.

The breakfast club provides a good range of activities and healthy foods. Pupils enjoy meeting their friends in a family atmosphere that transcends culture and age. The manager has excellent, warm and friendly relationships with pupils. Newcomers with limited English are not only made very welcome, but also make good progress in their language skills because they are encouraged to talk. The very pleasant atmosphere ensures they benefit socially, culturally and, thanks to the calm start to the day, emotionally. The club provides very effective support for working parents. There are many similar characteristics at the after-school club. Pupils evidently enjoy their time at the club and say that it is fun and that they do not mind waiting for their parents in this way. A rota of activities ensures a variety of activities, but staff are flexible and listen to pupils' preferences. As with the breakfast club, there are good opportunities for pupils to mix and play together and relationships with adults are very warm and friendly. Both clubs meet welfare requirements and provide an excellent quality of care.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. He gets effective support from the senior leadership team and between them they foster strong teamwork. Staff are united in a deep commitment to the pupils, shared professional values and a common sense of purpose. The school is highly inclusive and this shows in the way that staff support pupils very effectively. Members of the leadership team accurately monitor pupils' progress and evaluate this data to set targets. They have an extremely accurate view of the school's strengths, but recognise middle management's role in self-evaluation has to develop further. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection and the capacity for further improvement is good. Clear priorities are identified within the school improvement plan. These do not always have sharply defined criteria to judge their successful implementation and the impact on pupils' learning. Governance is good; governors monitor the work of the school effectively and, when necessary, act as critical friends. The governing body is committed to ensuring that no pupil is disadvantaged from participating in school life for financial reasons. The staff are effective in creating community cohesion. Their work with the church and international groups strengthens their outreach work in supporting parents.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

A very strong team of staff fosters the uniqueness of each child and ensures that their needs are met exceptionally well. This is the result of outstanding leadership. Children's starting points are well below those typically found in children of this age, but the outstanding provision enables them to make at least good progress and achieve exceptionally well. A significant proportion of children make excellent progress. Taken together, standards in the areas of

learning at the end of Reception are a little below those expected nationally. Children's personal and social development is outstanding. Children develop an admirable love of school and learning. They have high levels of trust in the adults who care for them and learn to interact with other children extremely well. This is because the care guidance and support for children and their welfare is excellent. Children feel very happy, safe and secure and are encouraged to be independent.

Adults manage children's behaviour impressively. They are aware of any issues that might have a bearing on children's welfare because of the very good relationships between staff and parents. The detailed monitoring of children's progress by key workers informs planning. This approach gives excellent support to the consistently high quality of teaching. Staff have an expert knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and the teaching of reading. Adults promote language skills particularly well. They also have an in-depth knowledge of children's prior attainment, needs and aptitudes. This is combined with their very high expectations of what the children can achieve, so there is a vibrant learning environment. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. The thematic curriculum accommodates all children's interests and highly effective use is made of the outdoor area. The introduction of French and Spanish gives great support to the children's language development and their cultural awareness.

What the school should do to improve further

- Define the success criteria for initiatives in the school improvement plan in order to judge how well they have been implemented and the impact on pupils' 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?	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?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	2
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?	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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	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**

13 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Catherine's Hoddesdon CofE Primary School, Hoddesdon, EN11 8HT

Thank you for making me so welcome in your school. I enjoyed my visit very much. I would like to thank particularly those Year 6 pupils who gave up some of their lunchtime to talk to me. I found what you had to say very helpful.

You are clearly proud of your school and so you should be. This is a good school, it is helping you to achieve well in your work and helping you develop as young people very effectively. You clearly enjoy school a great deal. You do many exciting things and I can see why you told me learning is fun. One Year 6 pupil said that it was 'a school where you can do things which you are proud of'. I thought that was a very helpful insight into your school. You told me that adults were kind and supportive and I agree with you. I think they care a great deal about you and want you all to do well. The teaching is good. That is why you make good progress across the school and why standards at the end of Year 6 are above those you see in many schools. It was good to hear that you feel safe in school and you were confident to go to an adult if you were troubled about something.

Mr Howsen leads the school extremely well and he would stress that this is because he has a very strong team of staff who work together extremely well. The school has come a long way since it was last inspected, and Mr Howsen and staff clearly know what it is they want to do to make further improvements to the school. I asked him to spend a little more time in working out how the school can identify the success of these improvements so that the school is clear when they have been achieved. One advantage of this is that the school can give itself a pat on the back before moving onto the next improvement.

You all play a very significant part in making St Catherine's such an exciting place and such a friendly community.

Sincere good wishes to you all in your future school careers.

Roderick Passant

Lead inspector