

# St Christopher's School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	132307
Local Authority	Service Children's Education (SCE)
Inspection number	329402
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Dickinson HMI

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Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Ministry of Defence
Age range of pupils	3–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	182

Appropriate authority	Service Children's Education
Chair	Commander Mike Goldthorpe
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Coventry
Date of previous school inspection	16–19 May 2005
School address	Europa Road Gibraltar BFPO 52
Telephone number	00350 200 55550
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Age group	3 - 12
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Christopher's School has pupils aged 3 to 12. As a middle deemed primary school, it is unique amongst SCE schools. There are 149 pupils on roll with 33 in the nursery. It serves children from Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and Army personnel as well as civilian families. The majority of pupils spend about two and a half years in the school. Attainment on entry to the Nursery matches the expectations for three year olds and standards on entering Reception are better than is usually found. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Very few speak English as an additional language. Staff turnover has been high in recent years. Service Children's Education (SCE) has seconded an attached adviser to the school over the last eighteen months. The majority of teachers, including the assistant headteacher were appointed from the beginning of this academic year.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Christopher's provides pupils with a satisfactory education. The school's good attention to pupils' care and welfare means pupils are happy in school and have positive attitudes. Their personal and social development is good. Most pupils spend two to three years in the school. Several parents wrote to say how they appreciated the way the school welcomed new parents and pupils. Pupils also spoke positively about the steps the school takes to help them adapt quickly to life at St. Christopher's.

The school has received considerable support from SCE consultants over the last eighteenth months. This has provided challenge and support for the headteacher and senior leadership team. Senior leaders are focusing increasingly on pupils' academic progress as well as their personal welfare and happiness. There has been clear progress over the last year or so in tackling important areas, such as the teaching of writing and spelling and, particularly, the improved provision in Years 1 and 2. As a result, the decline in writing and mathematics over recent years at Year 2 has been halted, pupils are making better progress and standards are rising. Test results have been consistently above average at Year 6 and Year 7. Standards in Year 6 are closer to average this year, because this year group is very small and some pupils have learning difficulties, but standards at Year 7 are showing a similar pattern to previous years. Standards are above average overall.

Satisfactory teaching is promoting satisfactory progress across the school. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching is improving and becoming more consistent. The improvements in Years 1 and 2 mean the school is in a good position for the above average standards at the end of the Foundation Stage to continue. The school's focus on phonics and writing and the additional support provided for small groups of pupils are having a positive effect and helping to boost progress. Some of the work stemming from the 'Big Write' sessions shows pupils' potential but their day to day writing does not always reflect the same standards. Teaching is satisfactory rather than good because lessons do not routinely cater for the full ability range. When the same work is set for all pupils in the class, the higher attaining pupils in particular are not challenged sufficiently. The school sets target levels that pupils in Years 2 and 6 are expected to reach but does not set targets for other year groups. This means the school is not setting challenging targets for pupils in each year, based on their prior attainment and, as a result, most pupils make the expected progress rather than good progress. The school enriches the curriculum in many ways, by taking advantage of the opportunities provided through the Command and through living on Gibraltar. Pupils speak positively about this range of activities especially the residential trips to Spain.

The deputy headteacher has worked hard to set up a tracking system for monitoring pupils' ongoing progress. Together with the assistant headteacher, he has used this to analyse the progress pupils have made over the last year. It is not used, however, to analyse the progress that pupils who are in the school for two years or more make, as opposed to those who have joined more recently. The senior leaders have a generally accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. When coming to judgements about the school's effectiveness, however, they place insufficient

emphasis on the outcomes for pupils, such as their standards and progress. This has led the school to judge some aspects, such as teaching, learning and pupils' progress, to be good when they are satisfactory.

Leadership is satisfactory. The senior leadership team is changing at the end of this year, when the deputy headteacher and attached SCE advisor leave to take up appointments at another SCE school. Discussions with the senior leaders who will remain and the middle leaders who are set to join the senior leadership team show the school has the capacity to improve.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children enjoy the open-plan, indoor learning environment and a well-planned range of structured activities. Children have access to satisfactory outdoor facilities to enhance their learning, particularly in physical development. There are some shortcomings in the overall quality of the playground surfaces in this area and work is shortly to commence on repairing and improving the outdoor learning environment.

Since the last inspection, improvements have been made to bring about a more consistent approach to planning across FS1 (Nursery) and FS2 (Reception) classes. There is a good ratio of adults to children, enabling effective intervention and support across the required areas of learning. Each keyworker takes responsibility for observing and recording the achievements of a small group of children. In this way, detailed records are built up on the small day-to-day steps in children's progress across the Foundation Stage. Staff use this information well in order to plan future learning activities that help children to build on what they can already do.

Children are well cared for, guided and supported. The development of their personal, social and emotional skills is given a high priority. Consequently children settle in quickly, responding well to the school's day-to-day routines. They grow in confidence, behave positively and learn to get along well together. The Foundation Stage is well led. Teaching and learning are good. By the time they start Year 1, most children meet or exceed the standards expected for their age.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Set challenging targets for pupils, based on their prior attainment, to promote good achievement for all pupils
- Raise teachers' expectations of what their pupils are capable of achieving in lessons and ensure that planned tasks cater well for pupils' individual needs
- Ensure that senior leaders use the tracking and target setting to monitor all pupils' progress during the time that pupils spend in school
- Ensure that senior leaders evaluate the impact of the school's provision and new initiatives when judging how well the school is doing.

## Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are above average overall and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards at Year 2 have been relatively weak for several years but are now beginning to improve and are likely to be above average this year. These pupils started Year 1 with above average standards and did not make sufficient progress during Year 1. Their progress has accelerated considerably this year. Nevertheless, since leaving Reception, their overall progress has been satisfactory. Standards have been consistently above average by Year 6 over recent years and a similar picture has occurred in Year 7. However, with relatively small year groups, standards do show some variability from year to year. This year, for example, standards at Year 6 are broadly average whilst at Year 7 they remain above average. Analysis of the school's data and scrutiny of pupils' work shows that pupils' progress between Years 3 and 7 is satisfactory.

## Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are happy in school and enjoy being at St Christopher's. Their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Pupils particularly like the range of activities that the school organises for them and speak with fond memories of trips, and special events. Pupils are friendly and helpful. They are very aware that pupils may feel vulnerable when they first come to the school, and to Gibraltar, and are keen to make new pupils feel welcome. Behaviour is good overall although a few pupils are quick to become restless, especially when there is a lull in their learning, and have a tendency to interrupt their teachers. Pupils respond well to opportunities to work in groups. The members of the School Council are proud of their achievements in raising funds for the school and charities. Pupils keep active and show good awareness of keeping healthy. They feel safe and secure and know that there is always an adult they can approach if they need help. Pupils' good social skills and personal development, and their above average standards mean they are well prepared for the next stage of their education and their future lives.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving, as a result of focused training, challenge and support for staff. Pupils' books show teaching is not yet bringing about sustained, good quality learning for teaching to be judged good overall. Common features of most lessons are good relationships between adults and pupils and pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Staff make good use of praise and encouragement to build self esteem and confidence. Most pupils apply themselves to their tasks and listen to their teachers and each other. Many teachers make effective use of resources, such as interactive whiteboards. In the most successful lessons, planning caters for all abilities, so that all pupils are appropriately challenged. In these cases, teachers ensure that pupils' knowledge is built upon successfully and they use questioning well to extend their learning. These lessons move along at a brisk pace and there is a good balance of interesting activities. This is not typical of all lessons. Learning slows when all pupils undertake the same tasks. This does not cater well for

the ability range. In these cases, higher attaining pupils are not given sufficiently high levels of challenge and lower attaining pupils struggle to complete the work. There are inconsistencies in how teaching assistants are deployed. They contribute very well to pupils' learning in some lessons but, in others, they have limited impact.

## Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is currently being reviewed. It has not been a high priority in the last few years due to the need to secure improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. The school provides additional support and intervention in literacy and mathematics for targeted groups of pupils. As well as providing support for pupils who need extra help, higher attaining pupils also have opportunities to work on more challenging tasks. The school provides a good range of additional activities beyond the school day, including residential trips for older pupils. Visits, visitors and themed days also promote pupils' enjoyment of learning well. The school maintains close links with the Command to enhance its curriculum, for example in arranging team building days and visiting naval warships and aircraft carriers. The school provides well for information and communication technology and pupils enjoy using computers to aid their learning. It has rightly identified the Year 7 curriculum as an area that requires further expertise in science, and design and technology.

## Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has a positive ethos and provides good levels of pastoral care. At the last inspection, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were not well supported. Provision for these pupils has improved over the last year. The new system of Learning Logs, for example, is proving successful. These pupils' achievements are monitored and new learning targets set as necessary. The school has good links with a range of external agencies to support pupils' care and welfare. The school meets the requirements for safeguarding and protecting pupils. It has developed a helpful system for tracking pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress is monitored carefully over a year but not over longer periods. There have been positive developments in how writing is assessed and most teachers give appropriate direction as to what pupils need to do next to improve. In some classes, pupils routinely assess their own understanding and progress and have a say in revising their targets. More generally, pupils do not have clear knowledge of how well they are achieving and of exactly what they need to do to move to the next level.

## Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The senior leadership team promotes pupils' care and well-being effectively. It is having an increasing impact on pupils' academic standards and progress. Over the last two years, senior leaders have focused rightly on raising standards, especially in Years 1 and 2, an area of weakness at the last inspection. Evidence from monitoring, by SCE and the school, indicates teaching has improved in these years and pupils are making better progress. The teaching team changed significantly in September and teachers have worked well together to bring about greater consistency in approach. The deputy headteacher has played a key role in developing a system for tracking individual pupils' progress since the last inspection. He and the assistant headteacher

have refined it further this year. Alongside this, the regular pupil review meetings are raising teachers' awareness of the progress pupils make whilst in their class. Staff turnover has affected the leadership of subjects since the last inspection, when this was identified as an area for improvement. Nevertheless, current middle leaders are committed to leading and monitoring their subjects and have undertaken some useful, focused monitoring activities. The SGC has developed its capacity and role in holding the school to account. Members visit the school and take part in training. They provide appropriate challenge for the senior leadership.



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## 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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2	
The effectiveness of boarding provision		
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

How good is 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	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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?	2	

<sup>1</sup> Grade 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.

## 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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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	



11 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St Christopher's School,

We visited your school recently and I would like to thank you for the welcome you gave us. We enjoyed our time in your school and were pleased that so many of you talked to us when we visited your lessons or met you around the school. Particular thanks go to the School Council, who talked at great length about your school, and to the two children who showed us round on our first day.

We found that you go to a satisfactory school. The senior leaders work hard to make sure you feel safe and happy. You are well cared for and the school has lots of ways to make new children feel welcome. You also play a part in this by being thoughtful. The school organises a lot of activities, visits and trips for you, which you told us you appreciate and enjoy.

Senior leaders and teachers are improving the standards you reach and the progress you make. This is especially so for children in Years 1 and 2 who, in the past, have not done quite as well as the rest of you. Many of you learn new things in most lessons but we have asked the school to make sure that lessons are also interesting and helpful for children who sometimes find things easy and for those who need extra help and support. We have asked the school to decide the standard that they expect each of you to reach by the end of the year so that teachers know what they need to aim for. Your school checks how much progress you make in a year and we have asked them to check it over a longer period, two or three years for example, because many of you stay at St Christopher's for that length of time. From time to time, the headteacher and senior staff decide themselves how good they think the school is. When doing this, we have asked them to consider carefully what you are getting out of school and the progress that all of you make.

Mrs McCloy and I wish you well during your time at St Christopher's and, for those of you who are moving soon, in your next school too.

With best wishes

Margaret Dickinson  
Her Majesty's Inspector