

# St Philomena's Roman Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101653
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bromley
<b>Inspection number</b>	335765
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Margaret Coussins

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	210
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Philip O'Halloran
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mary Riley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Chelsfield Road Orpington BR5 4DR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01689 826550
<b>Fax number</b>	01689 826550
<b>Email address</b>	admin@st-philomenas.bromley.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
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Manchester M2 7LA

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 17 lessons and nine teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher and other staff with leadership and management responsibilities. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documentation including the school improvement plan, monitoring records, the school's self-evaluation document, pupils' progress records and safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires were received and analysed from 54 parents and carers.

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

- ? how well pupils, especially the more able, improve their writing skills
- ? how successfully the curriculum has been developed and its impact on pupils' learning, enjoyment and personal skills
- ? the impact of the strategic work of the governing body on school improvement
- ? how well pupils take responsibility, use their initiative and develop independence.

## Information about the school

St Philomena's is a slightly smaller than average primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage and the largest other group is from Black African backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is not the first language is smaller than found nationally as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their needs relate mainly to moderate learning, behavioural, emotional and social, and speech, language and communication difficulties. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class. The school has gained a Healthy School award and an outstanding award from Transport for London.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

### Main findings

St Philomena's is a good school of which pupils, parents, staff and governors are rightly very proud. Parents are very positive about the school and appreciate the positive and friendly atmosphere. One wrote, 'When you join St Philomena's you become part of a family.' Pupils are great ambassadors for their school. One pupil said, 'All children have respect and kindness, we all treat each other the same, no one is lonely here and teachers have respect for children.' Behaviour is exemplary and pupils care for each other and their environment. Their outstanding personal skills, including their spiritual, moral and social development, are underpinned and promoted through the outstanding care, guidance and support from all the staff. Good and sometimes better teaching and a good curriculum inspire and motivate pupils to become independent and resourceful learners. There is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching throughout the school when activities are not matched to precisely meet the learning objectives for the lesson and as a result, some pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of. The quality of pupils' singing and artwork is high and contributes strongly to their outstanding spiritual and cultural development. By the time pupils leave school, their attainment is high and they achieve exceptionally well. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage but are not always challenged by the same richness of learning opportunities as seen in some other classes and they are not always encouraged to have a clear awareness of what they are learning.

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors work closely together, and very effectively, to evaluate the strengths and areas to develop in the school and drive forward improvement. They know exactly what to do next. The relentless drive and commitment of the highly effective headteacher to ensure that all pupils have the best learning experiences has successfully improved many aspects of the school's work from good to outstanding since the last inspection and demonstrates that there is an outstanding capacity to improve further.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- ? Draw on the expertise within the school to ensure that teaching consistently matches that of the best and that activities are well matched to precisely meet clear learning objectives in every lesson.
- ? Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by helping children to have a better understanding of what they are learning.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**1**

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Pupils really enjoy learning and this, along with their very positive attitudes and excellent behaviour, makes an important contribution to their outstanding achievement in English, mathematics and science. For example, pupils in Year 6 really enjoyed setting mathematical challenges for each other in problem-solving activities. One pupil said, 'We learn from each other because I show him my way and he shows me his, they're both right and so we know of an extra way to do it another time.' They very successfully acquire excellent personal attributes such as the ability to negotiate, collaborate, debate and empathise. For example, Year 2 pupils learning about water scarcity in an Indian village really thought hard about what their lives would be like without access to clean water. These are examples of lessons where pupils make outstanding progress because learning is particularly memorable for them and draws most successfully on opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and develop their independent learning skills. This same level of progress and learning is not even throughout the school where activities are not always as well matched to the learning objectives of the lesson, which is why learning and progress are good rather than outstanding. This is also one of the reasons why the school's overall effectiveness is similarly judged.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are in the first stages of learning English make similar good progress to others because their needs are identified at an early stage, they are supported very well and fully included. Pupils participate enthusiastically in a range of sporting activities. Their commitment to walking or cycling to school has been recognised by an outstanding award from Transport for London. These aspects as well as their understanding of healthy eating and balanced diets, promoted well through regular cookery lessons for all pupils, contribute to their excellent awareness and commitment to a healthy lifestyle and acknowledged with a Healthy School award. Pupils take their responsibilities in class and around the school very seriously. Pupils value the role of playground pals and prefects who are excellent role models for younger pupils and effectively promote and encourage excellent behaviour and attitudes. The role that pupils play in the wider community is particularly notable. The talented choir performs at many local events, for example, where pupils have opportunities to meet and talk with elderly residents. They enjoy being enterprising and take part in many fund-raising events, for example raising money to send a child to Lourdes and supporting global causes that help them develop an understanding of people who are less fortunate than they are.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Lessons are carefully planned and teachers work very hard to make learning interesting and exciting for pupils. One pupil said they have 'lovely teachers who teach us in a fun way, but it is still learning?'. The good, well-balanced curriculum is carefully planned to provide activities that are relevant and meaningful to pupils. Senior leaders are resolute in their work to shape a curriculum that best meets the needs of all the pupils and this is ongoing work to become embedded across the school. Themed and creative approaches to learning are enhanced by a wide range of enrichment opportunities, including good use of the school grounds, visitors to school and trips. These activities broaden pupils' interests and experiences. Pupils and parents and carers appreciate the wide range of after-school clubs, though some parents and carers said they would like more for younger pupils.

Teaching is often skilful, motivating and enthusiastic. Provision to support more able pupils through group work is successfully developing them as writers and improving their writing skills. Pupils, especially boys, benefit enormously from opportunities to talk through their ideas and learn how they can use different features of writing to best suit a particular purpose. Teachers manage their classrooms well and teaching assistants provide skilled and generally well-targeted support. Good assessment is an integral part of most lessons. Teachers carefully check on pupils' progress at significant points and encourage them to explain what they have learned. Good marking by teachers gives pupils clear guidance about the next steps they need to take to improve their work. However, sometimes pupils are not given opportunities to respond to and follow up their suggestions and on occasions the marking does not relate to the learning objectives of

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the lesson.

Parents and pupils agree that the school looks after them exceptionally well. One parent wrote, 'The school offers exceptional pastoral care, the school has an atmosphere where everyone knows each other – pupils and teachers alike – and everyone is caring, respectful and approachable to each other.' The needs of vulnerable pupils are very well met and greatly enhanced by the work of the family worker and the excellent links with other agencies to provide very well-targeted support.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The highly inclusive ethos of the school ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to learn and develop as well-rounded individuals without fear of discrimination. It ensures that all pupils have every chance to take part in all of its activities and as a result, all groups of pupils achieve exceptionally well. Community cohesion is good. The school has strong links with the local community and the local parish. It actively encourages all parents, carers and pupils to respect and understand different cultures and faiths, the diversity in the area and in the wider world. There have been successful and well-attended multicultural evenings and there are links with a school in Ghana, where many pupils have families, and a school in London. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding and the school ensures that pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

The consistency of approach of all leaders is an example of the effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement. Teamwork by all staff is strong and there is a shared goal of excellence and high expectations. There is no complacency, demonstrated by the participation of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, in a 'good to outstanding?' programme to support school improvement. Monitoring, self-evaluation and tracking of pupils' progress are rigorous and lead to a clear identification of what needs to be improved and well-targeted support. For example, the provision of extra support to improve the writing skills of more able pupils. Leaders clearly identify where their expertise can benefit colleagues, but there have not been enough opportunities to share their skills to raise teaching from good to outstanding. The governing body provides good support and the school benefits from a range of expertise within its members. It shares the vision for excellence and could further demonstrate this by providing more rigour in its

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challenge to the school in all areas of its work.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Reception class make good progress from their starting points that are generally slightly below expectations for their age. There are positive, trusting relationships with the team of adults and as a result, children are happy, behave well, settle well into the routines of the day and are very well cared for. Children understand the need to keep themselves safe and healthy. They make a good contribution to the smooth running of the day by, for example, registering their names on arrival, and choosing and tidying away their activities. They play together well, for example, when engaged in role play in the 'medical centre' where there are good opportunities for children to experiment and develop their early writing skills. Children have access to a safe and secure outdoor area, which they enjoy, but the purpose of their play both inside and outside is not always clear and activities sometimes lack sufficient challenge to take learning forward. Adults do not always pick up on the opportunities presented to extend children's thinking and learning. When children come together at the end of a session they are often asked to share what they have been doing and not always helped sufficiently, through skilled questioning, to understand what they have been learning. Occasionally, questions posed require single word answers and so sometimes opportunities are missed to extend and enrich their language development. There are many opportunities for children to look at books and listen to stories, which help them develop enthusiasm for books and reading. Activities planned are sometimes too prescriptive and lack an inviting variety of resources. For example, when children were

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making 'identikit' pictures to follow on from a visit from the police service, the limitations of the resources provided did not fully encourage their creative and imaginative development. Regular assessment keeps track of where children are and milestones in their learning are recorded in 'Learning Journey' books, which children spoke about with great enthusiasm. Although some aspects such as communication, care and day-to-day running are good, the overall quality of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

All the parents and carers who completed the questionnaire agreed that their children enjoyed school and almost all agree that they are happy with their children's experience at school. This reflects the findings of the inspection. A few disagreed with some of the statements, mainly that they do not feel that the school is meeting their children's particular needs. The inspectors found that the school meets the needs of its pupils very well.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Philomena's Roman Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 215 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	65	19	35	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	40	74	14	26	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	35	31	57	3	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	19	41	76	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	22	41	32	59	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	22	39	72	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	41	32	59	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	12	22	37	69	3	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	24	34	63	3	6	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	48	25	46	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	33	30	56	3	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	26	48	28	52	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	57	21	39	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



7 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Philomena's Roman Catholic Primary School, Orpington, BR5 4DR

I am writing to thank you for the lovely warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. What a lovely time we had with you. I am writing to thank you for being so friendly and polite and telling us what you thought about your school. You are right to enjoy coming to St Philomena's because it is a good school and many things are outstanding.

We agree with you and your parents that your school is an exceptionally caring and safe place to be and this, as well as your excellent attitudes to learning, helps you make good progress. We were very impressed with the way you all get on so well together and the fact that you care and respect each other in your work and play. Your school has improved in lots of ways since the last visit by the inspectors because the headteacher and all the adults always work very hard to make it better for you. You work very hard too and by the time you leave you are doing exceptionally well in your English, mathematics and science. You do especially well in using your initiative and becoming independent in your learning. Well done for this.

Here are two things that we know will help the school get even better:

- children in the Reception class should be helped to understand what they are learning so they can do even better
- all your lessons should be taught as well as the very best ones and we would like your teachers to help each other to make sure this happens and make sure that the activities they plan for you really match the learning objectives that you are given at the beginning of lessons.

We were also very impressed with your exceptionally good artwork around the school and we thought your singing was fantastic. Thank you again for helping us and for making our visit to your school so enjoyable.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins Lead inspector

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