

St Swithun Wells Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102421
Local Authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	335900
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Raminder Arora

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Sean Sinclair
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Andrews
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors spent around half their time looking at pupils' learning, visiting 19 lessons taught by 10 different staff. They also held meetings with the Chair of Governing Body, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' written work, records of their progress, lesson planning, playtime activities and the school's self-evaluation documents, including records of teaching and the main improvement plan. Inspection questionnaires were received from pupils, staff and from 125 parents and carers.

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

- how well pupils make progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 6
- how well staff use assessment to plan work for pupils at the right level, including marking and pupils' own assessments of how well they are doing
- how effectively pupils' progress is tracked to prevent underachievement
- the effectiveness of school leaders, including senior leaders, middle managers and governors, in promoting higher standards and improved progress by pupils.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized school. The pupils are predominantly White British with a minority from other ethnic backgrounds. A few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Of these, the majority have moderate learning difficulties or speech, language or communication issues. The proportion eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. Most children join the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery class. The school provides a breakfast club for pupils. Although fully staffed at present, the school has experienced considerable staff turbulence in the last three years. Only one member of the teaching staff has been there for more than two years. The current headteacher was the fifth in a row of acting headteachers before her appointment to the substantive post in April 2009.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a happy, harmonious and fast-improving school in which all pupils are valued and their achievement is satisfactory. As a result, pupils say they feel safe and secure in knowing that adults will always help them. As one pupil said: 'My school is the best! I love it here.' They speak excitedly about the good range of extra-curricular activities and of how they enjoy them. The school takes good care to ensure that all groups, regardless of gender, ethnicity or ability, have the same opportunities. Parents and carers also are very appreciative of the school. Comments such as: 'Since their appointments, the headteacher and the deputy head have done a fantastic job in restoring the confidence of parents,' and 'The headteacher's impact on the school has been amazing, we can see it getting better and better,' typify the many positive responses from parents and carers received by the inspection team.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning. Good care, guidance and support and the well-developed curriculum ensure that they make good progress in improving their personal skills and qualities. Their academic development, however, is more varied. Attainment is above average, but a low number of pupils attain levels higher than expected for their ages, particularly in English. Following the good start that children have during the Early Years Foundation Stage, their progress through Key Stages 1 and 2 is less consistent, although satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching also varies, so that teaching is satisfactory overall, although much good or better teaching was seen during the inspection. In a very successful lesson with a higher ability Key Stage 2 mathematics group, pupils responded very well to rigorous questioning, the brisk pace, strict time limits and challenging group tasks. Where teaching is weaker, pupils' activities are not precisely matched to their different abilities. In some classes, pupils' abilities are not well enough assessed, or time is not managed well and the pace of learning drops. In addition, pupils are not given enough information about what they are trying to learn; they do not evaluate how well they have done, and do not always understand how to get better.

Since the last inspection, the school has been through significant instability at senior level. The new senior leaders have been effective in tackling key weaknesses. In reading, writing and mathematics, pupils' progress is now carefully tracked and, as a result, leaders have detailed information about the progress pupils are making. This has given them an accurate view of the school's strengths and what needs to be improved, so that effective support is put into place. Middle managers and subject leaders, several new to the role, are being strongly supported in their roles to improve their teaching skills and share best practice. The most recent assessments show that the school has turned a corner and progress is improving, particularly in writing. The governors are

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given good information regarding the school's performance. They are keen to develop their role as critical friend and become more involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. The school's capacity to improve further is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to accelerate pupils' progress, particularly for the more able, by the end of the current academic year through:
 - ensuring that teaching is consistently at least good and provides realistic challenge in lessons
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment data to carefully monitor those pupils identified as making slow progress
 - ensuring that teachers use knowledge of pupils' targets in planning and when marking work to move them on to the next steps in learning
 - helping pupils to develop the skills of self-assessment through regular opportunities for them to evaluate their own work in lessons.
- Increase governors' involvement in monitoring and challenging the work of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils talk with enthusiasm about how much they like their school. The vast majority are confident, articulate and polite; they consistently show respect and consideration for each other. In lessons, they are keen to do well, working productively both individually and in groups. Nonetheless, the overall quality of learning remains satisfactory for most groups of pupils. When given targets in lessons, they respond very well, but generally this practice is underdeveloped. Written feedback is not consistently clear about how well pupils are doing or what they need to do to improve. Those few pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, because they receive skilled additional support in lessons.

The standards seen in lessons and pupils' books were above average in most subjects. Writing has been the weakest area because pupils' progress in the past was too slow and they have much ground to make up. However, improved teaching methods, extra practice with phonic work in small groups before school, and opportunities to write at length in different subjects are already having a good impact. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are developing well due to the recently improved provision and planning for pupils to apply their skills across different subjects.

Relationships between pupils and staff are very positive and make a strong contribution to the harmonious community feeling within the school. The good contribution they make to the community includes caring for the local environment, mentoring younger pupils and being influential in the school travel plan. Concerts and sporting competitions provide many pupils with regular opportunities to make a wider positive contribution.

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There is a strong spiritual dimension to the wonder pupils find in some of the things they learn and they take every opportunity to join in with performing arts, especially from different cultures. Most pupils attend well. Their attitudes and personal qualities, combined with their secure basic skills, ensure they are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has rightly been a whole-school focus for improvement. Strengths in teaching include an effective contribution by support staff and generally skilled classroom management. The school works well with outside agencies to support the health, social or behavioural needs of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Small group interventions in Years 1 to 6 are precisely targeted on pupils' specific needs. However, the key reason why most pupils are not yet making consistently good progress once they move on from the Early Years Foundation Stage is that teaching and the use of assessment to guide pupils' learning still vary too much in quality.

The interesting curriculum is well designed to suit pupils' interests and needs and so

¹ 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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supports their enjoyment of learning. It is well focused on embedding key skills in literacy and numeracy, with a current emphasis on writing and spelling. ICT is used well in some subjects to allow pupils to present their work or research information for cross-curricular learning, for example in history. Other technology is used effectively in lessons to make ideas much clearer to pupils and enhance their thinking skills. Good provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education, the wide range of visits and visitors, and residential trips all have a strong impact on pupils' good personal development.

The school has effective strategies to sustain good attendance. There is a strong commitment to pupils and families. For example, in the good quality childcare provision before school, pupils eat a nutritious breakfast, are kept safe and enjoy interesting activities such as model making and art.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, well supported by senior staff, has worked skilfully to secure many improvements to provision which are beginning to increase pupils' progress. The priority has been to raise the quality of teaching. This is being achieved through coaching and supporting teachers and support staff in planning work which motivates pupils, and working closely with the parents and carers and other educational organisations to benefit children's learning. One major improvement already made has been in the way information about pupils' progress is collected and monitored so that staff are clear about where strengths lie and what needs to be improved. The role of middle managers and subject leaders in supporting school improvement is developing, but is not yet fully effective, particularly where the pace of improvements to teaching is concerned. Governors bring skills and commitment to their work, although they do not allocate enough time to challenge and support the work of school improvement.

School systems ensure that equality of opportunity is good. The need to strengthen provision for the more able pupils is a clear priority. Measures such as regular participation in Borough's Challenge Groups by the gifted and talented in Years 5 and 6 are beginning to have a good impact on pupils' progress. Safeguarding procedures are good, with well-established, detailed systems, regularly reviewed to keep pupils safe. Community cohesion is promoted well. There is a good plan to further develop global links and maximise pupils' understanding. The different nationalities amongst the pupils

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successfully encourage a respectful and tolerant community, both within school and in the wider local area.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. An emphasis on developing children's personal skills establishes a secure foundation for learning so that they happily work independently and together with increasing confidence. Strong, positive relationships between home and school enable children to settle quickly and allow parents to become fully involved in their children's learning. Good teaching includes high-quality, teacher-led group work and activities where children explore for themselves, such as in the Nursery class when working with the story of 'The Gruffalo' or when making biscuits in the Reception class. Staff regularly engage children in talking about their work, skilfully developing their language further. Informative assessment profiles give valuable insights into how well children are progressing, although this information is not always used effectively to match activities to every child's needs.

Good leadership ensures that children's progress is accurately assessed so that steady development takes place. The nursery leader is keen to bring improvements to the learning environment outside and developments towards sharing best practice across the Reception class in order to establish greater consistency across both Nursery and Reception classes. The flow of learning, for example between indoors and out, is improving but the school recognises that this is not yet fully established. Children thoroughly enjoy everything that is on offer. They show great enthusiasm during their

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'hands on' or free-flow activities, racing their tricycles and writing stories.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are very pleased with the school. Typically, they appreciate the easy access to staff, the motivating curriculum and the good care, particularly for those with additional learning needs. Some raised concerns around pupils' behaviour, lack of information about progress, the support for able pupils and homework being too easy. The inspection team considered all points carefully. The school is familiar with the issues raised and is committed to improving matters where possible. Behaviour seen during the inspection was never less than good. There are clear procedures, seen in operation, for the supervision of pupils as they leave school. However, although provision is improving, inconsistencies in teaching over time have affected the progress of able pupils and this remains an area for improvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Swithun Wells Catholic 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 inspectors received 125 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 248 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	57	51	40	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	76	61	45	36	4	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	32	61	49	23	18	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	33	74	59	5	4	4	3
The teaching is good at this school	56	45	59	47	5	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	38	64	51	12	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	47	63	50	1	1	2	2
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)	49	39	56	45	6	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	38	67	54	7	6	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	52	42	61	49	10	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	46	37	60	48	12	10	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	73	58	46	37	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	69	55	50	40	6	5	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



10 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Swithun Wells Catholic Primary School, South Ruislip, HA4 9HS

Thank you very much for being so helpful when we inspected your school. Talking to you and watching you while you worked helped us find out a lot. Special thanks to the pupils who gave up time to talk to us, so we could find out what you thought about school and what you had learned.

We have decided that your school is satisfactory and improving. This means that some areas are good and other areas could be improved. You do well in some aspects of your personal education. Your knowledge about being healthy is good, partly because you have some exciting sports clubs on offer. You behave well in the classrooms and work together effectively. We like the way that you play a useful part in running the school through your class and school councils. You are also good at helping others by raising money and making links with other schools. You make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics, but more of you could be reaching the higher National Curriculum levels. Those of you who need extra help with your work get good support and learn at a good rate.

We have asked your headteacher to improve your progress and help you get on to higher levels in your work by making sure that all of you know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve. This includes making sure that work is always hard enough for all of you and that your teachers use your learning targets when planning your lessons and when marking your work. We have also asked your governors to be fully involved in bringing about improvements in the school.

You can also help by continuing to work hard and acting on the advice teachers give you when they mark your work. Make sure you always ask if you are not sure what to do! I hope that you will all continue to enjoy your time at school.

Yours sincerely

Raminder Arora

Lead inspector

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