

St Clare's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103476
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	336087
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Susan Lewis

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	375
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	The Rt Rev Mgr J T Fallon
Headteacher	Mr Christopher Bradbury
Date of previous school inspection	20 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 21 lessons, saw 14 teachers and held meetings with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to self-evaluation, the tracking of pupils' progress, the school development planning and the safeguarding of pupils. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and analysed the responses of 61 parental questionnaires and those from school staff and pupils.

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

how well leaders and managers at all levels secure school improvement

- whether all groups of pupils and particularly the youngest children make as much progress as they should.
- how well pupils who enter the school later than the reception class achieve
- how successfully the school is improving attendance.

Information about the school

St Clare's is a large Catholic primary school with part-time nursery provision that serves a culturally diverse area. The great majority of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds such as Pakistani, Indian, Afro-Caribbean and Polish. A large majority of pupils speak English as an additional language and most either have no English or are at an early stage of learning English when they enter the school. In addition, the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is considerably higher than that in schools nationally, as is the number of pupils who leave or join the school after the Reception class. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also high.

Since its last inspection, the school has faced a number of challenges such as changes and recruitment difficulties in the school staffing and governance, and fluctuations in numbers and finance. The leadership team has undergone some considerable change and has only been fully in place since January 2010. The headteacher took up his role 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

3

Main findings

St Clare's is an improving school which provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has a number of good elements to its work. It is a harmonious, caring community in which pupils say they feel happy and safe and know they are learning. There is good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This promotes pupils' well-being and supports their good behaviour and highly developed sense of fairness. The school's caring ethos, and emphasis on tolerance and love for one another, means that everyone is valued and has similar opportunities to learn. The school works well with other partner schools, families and agencies to enrich provision for learning further. Equal opportunities, safeguarding and care, support and guidance are all good. Parents feel this too, saying they cannot thank the school enough for what they have done for their children and particularly for keeping them safe and happy. Although the school is highly focused on supporting community cohesion locally and within the school, this is satisfactory because it does not yet evaluate the impact of its work. Attendance is also satisfactory. It has been low in the past, but the school has worked hard with parents and others to improve this so it is now very close to expected levels. The recent introduction of a learning mentor has really helped here. Pupils have a good understanding of what is needed to be healthy and benefit from the many clubs and sporting activities. These links with other schools and partners, such as Aston Villa football club, enrich the good curriculum, which is focused on engaging pupils' interest and raising attendance and attainment.

Since the last inspection, attainment has dipped but there are now clear signs of improvement. Children enter the nursery and reception classes with extremely low skills and knowledge in all areas of the curriculum compared with those expected, and particularly in their language and personal and social skills. However, by Year 6, although attainment is still low, the gap is closing, because pupils make good progress from their starting points over their time at the school. This is true for all groups including the many pupils, often with little or no English, who arrive in school between Year 1 and Year 6, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Outcomes and pupil achievement overall are therefore satisfactory. In some subjects, such as in reading and science, pupils are achieving much closer to others of their age nationally and the gap in writing and mathematics is also closing. This is because the headteacher, his new leadership team, the governing body and the local authority, have accurately evaluated the school's effectiveness and put in place a range of good initiatives. While it is too early for the impact of all these to be felt fully, inspection evidence shows that they are having a positive impact on attainment. For example, a focus on writing and on letters and sounds is already paying off in terms of raising the

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number of pupils likely to achieve the expected levels in Year 2 and Year 6. This early evidence of impact demonstrates the school's satisfactory capacity to improve.

Teaching and learning are improving and are good overall, because of targeted support for specific teachers and subjects, although it remains satisfactory in Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of the Reception year, children have made satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals and good progress in their language and personal and social development. However, although there is much enthusiasm for the children's learning in the nursery and reception classes, and care for their welfare and safety, there are missed opportunities to accelerate their learning. This is because children do not have the balance of learning opportunities they should indoors and outdoors and teachers do not use the range of assessment techniques, such as observation, systematically enough to tailor their teaching to meet all children's needs. In particular, the reception classes do not have continuous access to an outside learning environment

The school now has strong and reliable data and procedures to identify underachieving pupils and has used these well for targeted programmes to raise attainment further, particularly in English and mathematics. The use of this data by teachers to challenge the learning of all pupils in every lesson is less well developed and rightly a current focus of the leadership team.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the learning and progress of children within the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that children have the right balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities
 - providing a more effective and freely accessible outdoor learning environment and ensuring that it is used to promote all areas of learning
 - making more systematic use of observation for tracking and assessing children's development and the next steps for them.
- Raise attainment overall by:
 - extending the use of data to set challenging targets for different classes and groups, as well as at individual and whole school level, and monitoring these rigorously
 - ensuring all teachers plan and provide lessons that take full account of children's levels and needs, and adapt their language and the resources available to meet these
 - improving the levels of attendance so that they become consistently as good as those expected nationally.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' learning and progress are good both in relation to their academic work and in aspects of their personal development such as their behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is for all groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, for boys and girls, and those who speak English as an additional language. The provision for spiritual, social, cultural and moral development is a strength of the school. It underpins all of its work and its ethos supports pupils working and playing well together in tolerance and harmony both inside and outside the school gates.

Pupils' achievement in mathematics and science at both key stages is improving, including at the higher levels. Progress in speaking and listening, reading and in personal and social development are also good because the school emphasises these from nursery. Sometimes the progress made by late entrants from different cultural backgrounds and with limited or no English skills in a very short time is remarkable. The school really works hard to identify pupils' strengths on entry and uses their bi-lingual teachers and teaching assistants well to support these pupils' progress and their general well-being and transition into school. The ways in which teachers use expressive story telling in English and visual and technological aids such as interactive whiteboards really excites pupils and supports the learning, progress and involvement of those who have more limited English very well.

Food technology, a good range of sporting activities and the strong personal, social and health education programme, all secure pupils' good understanding of living healthy lifestyles. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and manage risks, for example when carrying a sand tray or in relation to internet safety. There are satisfactory examples of pupils making contributions to school and community life through the school council and charity work. The good attitudes to learning, an emphasis on teamwork and social skills as well as improvements in key skills are all setting pupils up satisfactorily for their later lives.

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	4
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

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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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	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall because teachers have good subject knowledge, good relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well. Almost all teachers plan their lessons carefully, sharing objectives with pupils and giving good verbal and written feedback to them about how they are doing. Any available support from teaching assistants and from support teachers is generally used well to target groups and individuals, although sometimes in whole class lessons they do not have a clear role. Occasionally, the teachers spend too long talking, rather than drawing responses out from pupils with well-targeted questions. The best lessons have strong pace and challenge for everyone and use resources, such as the interactive whiteboard, very well. Teachers and teaching assistants are very alert to pupils' responses in lessons. Small group teaching, for example in guided reading, also challenges pupils well, constantly checking pupils' understanding and adjusting the teacher input accordingly. Assessment is more accurate than at the time of the last inspection and supports teaching satisfactorily. However, there is inconsistent use of this information to provide challenge in every part of the lesson for all groups of learners.

The curriculum is broad and highly relevant, using the local community, visits, visitors and the pupils' own backgrounds well to enrich their experiences and help them apply their developing skills. It also supports their cultural and social awareness. It has an appropriate and necessary emphasis on literacy and numeracy and their application in other subjects. Information and communication technology is used appropriately to support pupils' learning. The school has started to implement a 'creative curriculum' to reinforce cross-curricular links and bring the learning even more to life.

An ethos of care and concern for the individual permeates everything this school does. It works well with families and with other agencies both to provide for pupils' special educational needs, to keep them safe and to secure their wellbeing. Good arrangements are in place for helping pupils, whatever their age, to settle quickly into school when they first join. Good contacts with local secondary schools mean that pupils feel secure about the next stage of their education. Pastoral support is excellent. Bi-lingual staff aid pupils' swift inclusion into school and communication with families. The school is

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working well with the local authority and families to improve attendance further, for example through the work of the learning mentor and through more regular newsletters and contacts.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	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 and other leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and are determined to raise attainment and improve provision further, sharing their vision with all staff. They have quickly put into place a range of initiatives to strengthen the school's work. However, many of these are at an early stage still and so this aspect of their work is currently satisfactory. They are clear as to what needs to be improved in teaching and have enabled teachers to work together and with advanced skills teachers to hone their skills.

Safeguarding arrangements are robust and promote the well-being of pupils and staff. All pupils and staff are valued and included well. The school is vigilant in ensuring that everyone, whatever their level of need or background, has access to all of its provision. The school celebrates its own Catholic values, the diversity of backgrounds and the uniqueness of each individual. However the promotion of community cohesion, while well developed in the school, is satisfactory overall as leaders have yet to evaluate its work in this area. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is very supportive of the school but has struggled to recruit new members. It uses existing governors' strengths well for the various responsibilities and committees. The governing body holds school leaders to account for their actions and priorities, and champions the school within the church, community and local authority. Financial management is sound.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
	3
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

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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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children quickly settle into the nursery and reception classes because the atmosphere is welcoming and caring and because staff work hard to gain their trust. They enjoy the activities that they do and relationships between staff, children and parents and carers are positive. For example, parents are welcomed into the nursery to celebrate their child's achievements at the end of the morning. Children make satisfactory progress overall in their learning and development, although this is good in some areas of learning such as communication, language and literacy and personal and social development. Children quickly comply with any school rules and their behaviour and willingness to learn is good. However, they are given limited opportunities to make choices about the activities they engage in. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led satisfactorily. Leaders are aware of the current weaknesses and support and training have been provided by the local authority. Planned experiences challenge children and the more systematic attention to early reading and writing skills is having a positive impact. However, focused observation is not used to guide this and there are too few opportunities for child-initiated learning. The outdoor learning environment for the nursery is adequate but is not used to support all aspects of learning. In Reception there are too few opportunities for outdoor learning except at set playtimes.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
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

The vast majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were very positive about the school's work and its level of care and concern for their children. A

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very small minority had concerns about behaviour and about how their views were heard. Inspectors found that, although occasionally the behaviour of individuals is a challenge, overall it is good and managed well by the school. There are a number of opportunities for parents to give their views and receive support. A very small minority of parents and carers also wondered whether their child's needs were being met. Inspectors found that the school pays careful attention to the needs of individual pupils and this aspect of its work has improved over the last year. Progress overall is now judged good. Although attainment has dipped in the past, the school is now much more effective at identifying any pupils who are underachieving and at providing additional support.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Clare's 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 63 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 352 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	56	27	43	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	49	31	49	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	41	33	52	3	5	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	40	33	52	3	5	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	28	44	30	48	4	6	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	41	28	44	7	11	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	38	37	59	1	2	1	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)	22	35	30	48	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	30	34	54	6	10	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	40	31	49	4	6	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	32	35	56	5	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	37	36	57	1	2	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	44	32	51	2	3	1	2

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). 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">■ 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.



19 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Clare's Catholic Primary School, Birmingham, B20 3RT

Thank you so much for your warm and friendly welcome when we visited your school. It was good to hear how much you enjoyed school and liked your teachers and being with each other. We are pleased that you feel safe and that you certainly know about how to live a healthy life. We particularly like how well you all get on together and all the different clubs, visits and activities you have.

We think that you make good progress at the moment but we would like you to achieve even more. We know that the school is working hard to help you do better. We have seen the progress you have made in your reading and numeracy and that you are improving your writing, so we know that it is possible.

To help you we have asked the governing body, headteacher and your teachers to do certain things:

- improve the outside learning areas for the youngest children so that they can do more of their learning outside
- make sure that children in the nursery and reception classes have more time to choose what they want to do
- make sure the lessons build on the things that you can already do and challenge you to think
- keep checking on how well everyone is doing and provide help where it is needed
- work with your families and yourselves to make sure even more of you come to school every day.

All of you can help by making sure you do come to school everyday and by letting your teachers know how well you think you are doing.

Yours sincerely

Susan Lewis

Lead inspector

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