

St Catherine's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112305
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337899
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2010
Reporting inspector	John Heap

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Denis Smith
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Hill
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Six lessons were observed and four teachers were seen. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation form; the school improvement plan; the tracking of pupils' achievements; minutes of meetings of the governing body and review documents from the local authority. Twenty-five parental questionnaires were returned.

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

- the current evidence relating to pupils' achievement in writing
- the progress being made by various groups of pupils
- whether pupils receive good guidance from the target-setting and marking in their books and what this says about the quality of teaching
- whether attendance is improving, particularly where there is persistent absenteeism
- the quality of the school improvement plan.

Information about the school

This small primary school serves a mainly White British population. Several very small groups include pupils from other ethnic backgrounds, including Traveller families, and some speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is low. Above average proportions of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, or have a statement of special educational needs. Extended provision includes: specialist support for Traveller families and pupils learning English as an additional language; study support and links to the East Cumbria Family Support Association.

The school has been through an extended period of disruption to staffing and management since the previous inspection.

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

The school accurately judges that it is satisfactory, improving and provides sound value for money. Feedback from pupils, parents and carers is highly positive and a typical parental view is 'My child really enjoys school and really respects his teacher. She gets the best out of him'. The children get a good start in the Reception class and they make good progress, particularly in improving their communication, language and literacy skills which are weak on entry.

Satisfactory teaching, learning and academic development promote sound achievement overall. Pupils make satisfactory progress from Years 1 to 6. Progress through Key Stage 2 has fluctuated over time, but there is now an upward trend. The school's own data shows many pupils beginning to make better than expected progress. This improvement is too recent for the overall progress judgement to be good. Nevertheless, pupils do less well in English, most particularly the most able pupils. This is partly because pupils do not use their writing skills often enough. The school's recent emphasis on the improvement of basic skills for all pupils has to some extent restricted the time available for extended writing in the different subjects. Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is well promoted by the strong aspects of the otherwise satisfactory curriculum and through good care, guidance and support. Pupils' satisfactory cultural development is stronger in relation to local culture and the school is right to seek more ways to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of diversity within this country and globally.

The headteacher leads the school well. There has been a prolonged period of uncertainty caused by the many changes to staffing and leadership and she has successfully stabilised staffing and provided a firm steer that has motivated staff to accept challenges and to develop expertise. The school has benefited from the strong support from the local authority. This partnership has successfully identified the significant areas for improvement, particularly in teaching, the curriculum and in the detailed monitoring of the various groups in the school. This has led to clear improvements in the outcomes for pupils and particularly the academic progress they are making. Self-evaluation is accurate, realistic and challenging and the capacity to make further gains is good. Nevertheless, the school recognises that further refinement is needed to ensure that the governing body is better, and more independent, at monitoring and evaluating the school and that leaders concentrate more on pupils' learning in lessons, rather than the performance of the teacher, when evaluating the quality and impact of teaching.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise attainment in English, particularly for the most able, by:
 - – further embedding assessment procedures
 - – broadening the use and development of writing skills in other subjects
 - – continuing to develop teachers' knowledge and skills.
- Continue to improve monitoring and evaluation, by:
 - – increasing the amount and quality of independent monitoring and evaluation done by the governing body
 - – focusing more closely on pupils' learning when monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching.
- Increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of other cultures, particularly at national and global levels.
- 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.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

It is a mark of the improving picture in the school that, during the inspection, most pupils were seen to be making good progress in lessons and achieving well. However, higher attaining pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils enjoy learning, concentrate well and want to succeed. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong, respectful and trusting. Good use of rewards is building pupils' confidence and they are increasingly becoming independent learners.

The achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is satisfactory. Children enter the Reception class with skills and abilities that are well below average in communication, language and literacy, and broadly average in the other areas of learning. Over time, progress has been satisfactory. Attainment by Year 6 is broadly average overall, but English is the weakest area, most particularly in writing. Girls did less well than boys by some margin in 2009, but this picture is much less significant in the current Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make expected progress towards their targets. Those pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, those learning English as an additional language and the gifted and talented make the sound progress expected of them. The combination of good attitudes and satisfactory academic progress means that pupils are adequately prepared for their future.

Moral and social development are particular strengths. These lead to pupils' good behaviour, their strong attitudes to school and work and their positive support for each other. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the importance of leading healthy and safe lifestyles. Pupils and their parents and carers say that the school is an enjoyable place to be and this is confirmed by most pupils attending very regularly. Pupils contribute well to the smooth operation of the school, through the work of the buddies and peer mentors. The school council has also been influential in promoting healthy eating through their work in promoting healthy packed lunches.

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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	3
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	3
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and explain new ideas with clarity. They use resources well to capture and maintain pupils' interest. Teachers manage lessons effectively so there is a good pace to activities and, as a result, pupils have a good work rate. However, teachers are not always effective in providing work that stretches pupils of different abilities, particularly the more able. Consequently, pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Marking is not used consistently to guide pupils to how they might improve their performance. Teaching assistants generally provide valuable support for all pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The strengths of the curriculum are: the good support and guidance pupils receive on healthy and safe lifestyles; the opportunities to contribute to the school and their knowledge and understanding of local matters. Provision for potentially vulnerable pupils is satisfactory and improving, with a strong emphasis on developing basic skills, such as letters and sounds for the younger pupils and developing vocabulary and spelling for the older pupils. Regular visits and visitors add further interest to the curriculum. The school

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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is at an early stage of developing links between subjects so that pupils can use skills learned in one subject to support learning in others. This is particularly the case in their application of writing skills.

The pastoral care provided for pupils is good and much appreciated by parents and carers. The school can point to potentially vulnerable pupils being identified early, monitored closely and their development supported well. This includes providing their parents and carers with help and guidance along the way. Robust monitoring of areas such as attendance and behaviour has led to improved outcomes in these areas. Arrangements for joining the school, and to ensure a smooth transition to the next school, are strong. Developing pupils' self-esteem, respect for others and a sense of responsibility is central to the school's work and is reflected well in the day-to-day life of the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides good leadership that promotes strong ambition and is driving improvement. Of particular note are: the focus on improving basic skills; the development of a more interesting and challenging curriculum and developing ever closer links with parents and carers. High morale has been cultivated by developing the keen motivation and effective well-being of the staff. They have a common and shared vision for the school and make a good team. Their work is valued by governors, parents, carers and pupils. The school is not in any way complacent and staff know that there are areas that need further refinement, such as making consistent use of assessment data to challenge all pupils in every class. Planning for school improvement is detailed, challenging and realistic, but some areas lack clear measures of success.

Safeguarding procedures and practices are well established and lead to pupils being safe, really well cared for and ready for the future. The school promotes equal opportunities well. In particular, the monitoring of the various groups is very detailed and support and interventions are effectively deployed when there is a need. There are no signs of discrimination and the school actively works to ensure that pupils know and understand similarities and differences, for example, in local cultures and world religions. Community cohesion is promoted soundly. A lot of very useful work is done in the local area, and through the auspices of the church, and there is some evidence of links with global partners, such as a link with a church in Zambia. Governance is

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satisfactory. Governors play an increasingly visible and supportive part in the school. They are well informed by the school and effectively check on areas such as health and safety and finance. Nevertheless, they are too reliant on the school's management for the information they receive to be well placed to independently and rigorously challenge the school's performance. Finances are managed carefully and good forward planning means that important projects can be funded, for example, the soon to be remodelled entrance to the school.

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	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
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

The strong provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables them to settle quickly and make good progress. Key features in this are: good induction procedures; early development of good relationships between practitioners and children and the early assessment of children's skills and abilities. Children enter the school with a wide range of skills and abilities which overall, are broadly typical for their age. However, for many children their communication, literacy and language skills are very limited on entry. Planning is detailed and teaching is directed effectively to meet children's individual needs. The curriculum is well balanced between activities that are initiated by the children and those led by staff. A particular emphasis is placed on improving children's knowledge and use of sounds, letters and early writing skills. The effective direct teaching is then extended to activities in the various play areas, such as providing children with opportunities to write about things they are building. Children benefit from learning and practising their skills through play in the well stocked and interesting indoor and outdoor areas. The outdoor area provides a wide range of

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learning opportunities, for example, gardening, learning about minibests, using mobile toys and climbing equipment. As a result, children are now making better progress particularly in their language development. Children make good progress in their personal development because of the good care and support they receive. Welfare arrangements are promoted well by staff. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed.

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

The majority of parents and carers are happy with the school and what it is doing for their children. Written comments are particularly praiseworthy about the work of the headteacher and the support the school gives in a variety of ways. Typical comments include: 'The school provides excellent support.'; 'our son has improved immensely'; 'How nice it is to know a school where children have respect and manners.'. A very small number of parents had a few concerns relating to: feedback about their children's progress; Year 6 transition; problems caused by the disruptions to staffing and management. The inspection team judged that the school's performance in these areas was at least satisfactory. Inspection evidence also shows that the current situation is much more stable because of good leadership.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Catherine'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 25 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 104 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	84	4	16	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	92	2	8	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	20	80	4	16	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	76	5	20	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	80	5	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	76	6	24	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	64	8	32	1	4	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)	15	60	8	32	2	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	80	5	20	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	76	6	24	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	76	6	24	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	92	2	8	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	84	4	16	0	0	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). 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.



26 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Catherine's Catholic Primary School, Penrith, CA11 9EL

On behalf of the inspection team, can I tell you that we thoroughly enjoyed our time in your school. We felt that your courtesy, politeness and helpfulness showed how proud you are of your school. We judged your school to be giving you a satisfactory education and here are some of the important things we found.

We particularly liked:

- the way that many of you are learning much more and making better progress
- the way you get on so well together. Your good behaviour, and the fact that you feel safe, show that you really enjoy school
- the fact that your attendance has improved
- your delight when you get awards
- the way that you take your jobs in school seriously and help each other
- the fact that the staff know you and your families well and help when needed
- your headteacher is leading the school well.

To improve the school further we have asked the governors and staff to:

- help you do even better in English by continuing to improve the way that they assess your work and help you to improve and making sure that you have more opportunities to write in other subjects
- make further improvements to the way they check on how well the school is doing
- increase your knowledge and understanding of other cultures, particularly in the rest of the country and overseas.

We are sure that you will want to help in this by continuing to do your best and following the advice you are given.

Best wishes and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr John Heap

Lead inspector

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