

The Cathedral School of St Mary

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113489
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	338183
Inspection dates	7–8 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Nigel Cromey-Hawke

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	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Miller
Headteacher	Catherine Maltbaek
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited each class, with seven lessons being observed in total, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of school documentation, including development planning, self-evaluation records, policies and performance data. Inspectors analysed 31 parental, 23 pupil and 13 staff questionnaire returns.

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

- what steps have been taken by the school to improve the attainment of girls and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- how effectively the curriculum and teaching meets the often complex needs of pupils
- the quality of provision, leadership and management within the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This is a small Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic primary school attached to the Cathedral in the centre of Plymouth. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. There is a high proportion of pupils for whom English is not their first language and of pupils who enter or leave the school at times other than is normal. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Pupils are taught in a Foundation class, which often combines Reception with Year 1, and then in Year 2, Year 3/4, Year 5/6 classes. The school has various awards, including Healthy Schools and Activemark. The school operates a breakfast club.

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

2

Main findings

The Cathedral School of St Mary is a good school. It has some outstanding features and its capacity for sustained improvement is good. The vast majority of parents, pupils and staff are fully supportive of all aspects of its work. One parent typically commented that, 'my child has come along faster than I had hoped. He really enjoys school and that is a testament to the school's ethos and care.'

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge, understanding and skills below, and in many cases well below, that typical for their age, notably in language skills. Progress here is good because of the good teaching, a lively curriculum and the very effective care and support provided. Pupils within the main school also make good progress, despite many joining part way through the school year and many having widely different needs and abilities. Good systems for measuring and monitoring progress enable the school to respond quickly to pupils' identified needs, and an extensive programme of additional support operates throughout the year to ensure these are met. As a result, the progress of pupils whose first language is not English and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Standards reached on leaving Year 6 are in line with national averages. Given pupils' attainment on entry, this constitutes good progress.

Pupils are clear that they feel safe in school and highly valued, as a result of the outstanding care, guidance and support they receive. Teaching is consistently good across the school, with good pace and variety. Target setting for individual pupils is highly developed within English, but less effective in mathematics and science. Assessment is well used to support learning, with the good curriculum regularly being adapted to reflect the needs of different groups. The school is a calm, welcoming and lively learning environment, characterised by strong values of tolerance and respect. This is helped by the highly effective use of partnership work that helps promote pupils' learning and well-being. The promotion of equality of opportunity is outstanding, as is pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils show their enjoyment of school through their good behaviour and attendance.

Leadership and management are good within the main school and Early Years Foundation Stage. New staff and new roles are already well established and clearly focused upon driving the school forward. The role of subject leaders in monitoring teaching and learning within their areas is, however, underdeveloped. All safeguarding requirements are met and governance is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Extend the good practice in target setting in English to mathematics and science so that pupils know more clearly how well they are working and what they have to do to improve.
- Develop the role of subject leaders, especially in relation to monitoring, so that they have a clearer picture of provision and its impact upon learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Test and teacher assessment data for the last three years show that overall, pupils attained average standards in all three subjects by the time they left Year 6. Overall, attainment on entry to the school is below average and, in many cases, well below. The school responds to this extremely well, with good assessment practices identifying each child's needs and extensive and well-resourced programmes of support put in place. All pupils, including those whose first language is not English, make good progress. All pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, acquire new knowledge, develop their understanding and learn new skills well, contributing to their good future economic well-being. There are good relationships within lessons, and consequently pupils behave well. Progress in reading is often very good as a result of the intense support provided by the team of talented teaching assistants. The school's extensive tracking system shows that the majority of classes are on track to meet the challenging targets the school has set. A real strength of the school is its specific monitoring of groups of pupils, such as girls, pupils with special needs and late entrants to the school, ensuring their good progress.

Pupils clearly enjoy the majority of their learning. The school is a warm, welcoming, harmonious and calm place that has high expectations of its pupils. It places a high priority upon the safety and emotional well-being of its pupils, and both parents and pupils are almost universal in their support of it. Pupils respond by behaving well. Attendance is good, and improving. Pupils have a good understanding of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle, reflecting the school's awards, and they take advantage of the good sporting activities provided by the school. The school council is effective, and pupils' involvement in school life is good, with some trained as 'peer mediators' helping younger pupils at playtimes. The tolerance, respect, friendliness and cooperation demonstrated by pupils within the diverse school community is impressive and reflects their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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
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	1

How effective is the provision?

In the vast majority of lessons, warm relationships, good pace and challenging activities meet the needs of pupils well, ensuring that good progress is made. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this and different teaching methods successfully to make learning interesting and relevant. Visits are used, together with information and communication technology (ICT), to bring learning alive. Role play and partner work are used regularly to engage pupils actively in their learning. Challenging targets are set for each year group and assessment data is used well by teachers to shape their teaching and target support with teaching assistants. The focus on raising levels of literacy has resulted in sophisticated individual target setting for pupils, but this is not extended to either mathematics or science. As a result, pupils do not have as clear an idea of their progress in these areas or an understanding of what they need to do to improve.

The good curriculum is planned carefully and is responsive to the wide variety of pupils' needs. Pupils receive a well-balanced range of experiences which enables them to make good progress and enjoy their learning. There has been a focus on girls' attainment that is proving successful. The school's involvement in the local Excellence Cluster of schools has brought benefits in the use of drama therapy and extension activities for able, gifted and talented pupils. The 'Widening Horizons' programme in Year 5 has stimulated interests in the world of work that will prepare them well for the future. There is a strong multi-cultural basis to the topic work that combines different subjects, helping promote pupils' understanding of diversity, but the school recognises that there is more it can do to develop cross-curricular links between subjects. Careful thought is given to equal opportunities for all learners.

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The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. The school works very well with a wide range of agencies and partners to support pupils in their learning, especially the most vulnerable. The breakfast club is very well attended and provides high quality pastoral support to pupils when necessary. The number and quality of support programmes operating within the school at any time is very high, reflecting the often complex needs of the changing population of the school. These are rigorously reviewed by the talented special educational needs coordinator, whose multi-lingual skills are well used to engage with parents and the local community. High quality individual education plans reflect the clear and appropriate strategies put in place to support pupils. The success of these is seen in the good progress that all groups make by the time they leave the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has an exciting vision for the school, reflecting its Roman Catholic and highly inclusive nature. She has led its improvement vigorously and sensitively since the last inspection. A very large majority of parents, pupils and staff are highly supportive of the leadership and management of the school. Staffing has been stabilised, new posts created and systems developed to meet the needs of the school. Whole-school self-evaluation is good, with a clear understanding of what needs to be done to bring about improvement. There are good plans in place to support this, although their scale makes it difficult to identify key priorities. Subject leaders have been given more responsibility for their areas but their role in monitoring teaching and learning remains underdeveloped. Safeguarding requirements are fully met and the school provides an extremely secure environment for learning. Governors are very knowledgeable and support the school well. Through a careful audit, the school knows the social, ethnic and religious context within which it operates well. Community cohesion is excellent at the local level and good in the wider sense, with international links being developed, although some have yet to impact upon 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	2

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	
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Comprehensive induction arrangements, including home visits, ensure that children and their parents and carers receive a warm welcome to the school. Children settle happily in the very safe environment. They enter school with knowledge, understanding and skills below and in many cases well below, those typical for their age, especially in language acquisition and emotional development. They make good progress in the Foundation class, as a result of the good teaching they receive in an environment which caters well for their needs. Pastoral support is very good. Many reach expected levels in their personal development, reading, spelling and creative development by the time they enter Year 1. Writing and mathematics remain areas of relative weakness for some, with below average levels being reached. Those whose first language is not English are fully integrated into the school and develop their literacy skills significantly, helped by the excellent language support they receive. Teachers communicate regularly with parents and carers and are well aware of children's interests. They plan a good range of activities that children enjoy, with a good balance between activities they direct and ones children choose for themselves through their 'Planet' scheme. Behaviour is good, with clear expectations and routines established. Children play and work together well as a result. Teachers regularly assess day-to-day learning, completing 'journey files' for each one, and then use this information well to plan children's next steps. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage is good, with the recently appointed member of staff very well supported by the experienced specialist teaching assistant. Some of the good developments in teaching and learning, and in leadership and management, have yet to be embedded and their full impact realised. Staff have high aspirations and good plans for the future.

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

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

A very large majority of parents who returned the questionnaires are very supportive of all aspects of the school's work. They especially appreciate the support given to pupils who enter at times other than is normal, helping them catch up on missed learning and integrating them quickly and fully into school life.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Cathedral School of St Mary 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 31 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 100 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	84	3	10	2	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	71	9	29	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	61	12	39	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	52	14	45	4	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	65	11	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	58	12	39	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	65	11	35	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)	16	52	13	42	2	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	48	15	48	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	58	11	35	1	3	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	48	12	39	3	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	68	8	26	1	3	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	77	5	16	1	3	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.



9 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Cathedral School of St Mary, Plymouth PL1 5HW

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me and my colleague when we inspected your school recently. You were very friendly, polite and enthusiastic about what you do. You told us a lot of interesting things about your school and you are clearly very proud of it.

The Cathedral School of St Mary is a good school. There are some outstanding aspects to it. You have a good start to your learning in the Foundation class and make good progress there as a result of the good teaching and care you receive. This continues into the main school where teaching and the subjects that you cover in lessons are also good. This means that when you leave in Year 6, you have made good progress in your learning. For those of you whose first language is not English, this progress is often very good. Those who find learning difficult also make good, sometimes very good progress, as a result of the excellent care, guidance and support the school provides. Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The headteacher, governors and staff work well together to make your school successful. I have asked them to consider two things that I think will help it to improve even more.

- Encourage subject leaders to monitor teaching and learning more rigorously so that they know more clearly what is going on in their subjects.
- Extend the existing good practice in target setting in English into mathematics and science so that you have a more accurate picture of how well you are working and what you need to do to improve.

You can help by telling your teachers how best you learn and if you have any problems. I wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Nigel Cromey-Hawke

Lead inspector

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