

St Felix Roman Catholic Primary School, Haverhill

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124769
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	340651
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Cheryl Thompson

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gavin Mills
Headteacher	Mrs J W Lashmar
Date of previous school inspection	21 November 2006
School address	School Lane Haverhill CB9 9DE
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The majority of time was spent looking at learning. Inspectors observed all nine teachers teaching and nearly all teaching assistants working with groups or individual pupils. Twelve lessons were observed and meetings held with groups of pupils, governors, the headteacher and the teaching and learning team. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's safeguarding documentation, pupil progress tracking information and school development planning. The 88 questionnaires completed by parents and carers were analysed as well as 33 pupil questionnaires and 21 questionnaires completed by staff.

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

- the reason for the school's success in helping pupils to attain high standards in writing
- the reason pupils at the early stages of learning English do so well
- whether pupils are making enough progress in information and communication technology (ICT)
- how well letter sounds are taught in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

St. Felix Roman Catholic Primary is an average sized school. It is a first school and will remain so until September 2010. In the past, pupils have left the school at the end of Year 4 and moved to a local middle school or to St. Louis Catholic Middle School in Bury St Edmunds. Due to the local authority's school re-organisation in the area, St Felix is undergoing extensive building work to become a primary school, taking pupils to the end of Key Stage 2. This September, Year 4 pupils will have the option to stay at the school and continue their primary education until they leave at the end of Year 6 or they can transfer at the end of Year 4 to St. Louis Catholic Middle School. The local authority has delayed the re-organisation of the first, middle and upper school system in Bury St. Edmunds. Since the last inspection, the school has had to vacate its premises for a year due to structural works on the building. The school was housed in a group of mobile classrooms nearby.

The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are fewer than average pupils from other minority ethnic groups, with a small number of beginners in English. There is a smaller proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to that found nationally. Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage at age three or four in two part-time Nursery classes then move to one Reception class

The school has attained the national Healthy Schools award.

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

St Felix Roman Catholic Primary is a good school. Pupils make good progress and attain high standards. The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school in embedding ambition and driving improvement is outstanding. The school's effectiveness has improved considerably since the last inspection and this shows its good capacity for sustained improvement. It has a number of notable and outstanding features.

Pupils say that 'everything about the school is good.' They play and work happily together and thoroughly enjoy their time in school. Learning is motivating and good fun. Pupils work very hard in lessons and apply their high level of skills in reading, writing, mathematics and ICT very effectively to all aspects of their work. Their high standards and positive attitudes to learning prepare them exceptionally well for the next stage of their education.

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for all pupils. Links with parents are outstanding and contribute strongly to pupils' good progress, and especially the outstanding progress made by pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. Partnerships with outside agencies, such as with specialist teachers, have a strong impact on the good provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school safeguards pupils well.

Children start in the nursery classes with wide-ranging levels of skills and knowledge but generally these are below the levels typical of the age group, especially in the area of communication, language and literacy. These levels fluctuate significantly from group to group and from year to year. Children leave the Reception class with levels of skill and knowledge broadly expected for their age. They make a good start to their education, and all progress well in relation to their starting points, especially in developing their personal and social skills and basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Behaviour is good, and outstanding when teaching is outstanding. Pupils get on well together and enjoy taking on responsibilities. They have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves fit and healthy and put this into practice when choosing their school lunch and taking part in the daily session of 'wake and shake'. Attendance is above average.

The quality of teaching varies but is good overall. Key features of teaching are the excellent relationships within classes and the planning of interesting lessons based on precise assessment.

The curriculum is planned well and has a good impact on pupils' enjoyment of learning. A key feature is pupils' confident use of ICT in all subjects, for example to undertake research or word process reports.

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The headteacher sets high expectations for staff and pupils. All respond very positively and share her determination to build on the school's good reputation and improve further. The school has high aspirations, as seen in the challenging targets set for pupils and the good progress made in meeting these.

The teaching and learning team have thorough systems to monitor and evaluate how well the school is doing and how much progress is made by identified groups of pupils, such as pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at the early stages of learning to speak English.

The school promotes community cohesion well. Staff and governors ensure pupils have equal opportunities to succeed in their work.

There are two main areas which are the key to the school's next stage of successful development.

The headteacher has done much to raise the quality of teaching and assessment since the last inspection. She agrees that more needs to be done to raise the very small minority of satisfactory teaching to a consistently good or better level.

Standards of handwriting and presentation do not always reflect the content of pupils' work. There is no consistency across the school in the way that handwriting is taught.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to a consistently good or better level by:
 - rigorous and regular monitoring by the headteacher and teaching and learning team
 - using the outcomes of this monitoring to provide support, training and challenge for individuals.
- Improve standards of handwriting and presentation throughout the school by:
 - deciding on a whole school approach and style and teaching this consistently.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Since the last inspection, attainment in national assessments at Year 2 has risen from satisfactory to consistently high. The school has set challenging targets to ensure that these high standards are sustained as pupils move through Years 3 and 4. Data and scrutiny of pupils' work show that these targets are met and attainment at the end of Year 4 is also high.

Pupils' attainment in writing is a strength. Letter sounds (phonics) are taught well in the Nursery and Reception classes so that children start in Year 1 with secure foundations for future learning. Good and often innovative links between subjects provide exciting purposes for writing. Teachers provide a good balance between teaching the skills of writing and giving enough time for pupils to practise these. Work seen in pupils' books shows good progress over time and high standards, although standards of handwriting do not always reflect pupils' abilities. Attainment in ICT is also high, and pupils make

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optimum use of their skills in many subjects.

Pupils of all abilities achieve well and clearly enjoy learning a good deal. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points and have very good self-esteem. Pupils who are at the early stages of acquiring English make outstanding progress. This rate of progress is due in no small measure to the effective support provided by the school for these children's parents which, in turn, helps them to provide excellent help and support for their children's learning.

Good progress is made in most lessons because, in the main, teachers' planning meets the needs of all pupils effectively. Pupils rise enthusiastically to the numerous challenges in lessons and work constructively together. For example, Year 2 pupils gave great thought before naming three-dimensional shapes hidden in a 'feely bag'. Year 4 pupils identified and used to good effect the features needed for an exciting report on the school's visitor, 'Dr. How', during World Maths Day events.

Pupils contribute a great deal to the caring ethos of the school and take pride in being class monitors, playground PALs and members of the school council. Older pupils also take responsibility for organising a games club and, in each class, a few pupils act as ICT 'problem solvers' for their classmates to turn to if they need a little extra help with a software program.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	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 of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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How effective is the provision?

Teachers set high expectations for their pupils to work hard and behave well. Lessons are planned thoroughly to match work to pupils' abilities. Good use is made of the interactive whiteboards and ICT to capture pupils' interest. Under the guidance of teachers and the special educational needs coordinator, highly proficient teaching assistants provide good support for pupils needing extra help with their learning. Parents, too, are helped by the school to promote their child's progress in such ways as hearing them read every day at home and making sure they get to school in time for early sessions of small group work.

Occasionally, there is some satisfactory teaching where the pace is too slow. As a result, pupils do not always make good progress and behaviour sometimes falls below the usual high standards. The headteacher has done much to improve the quality of teaching since the last inspection and knows her staff's strengths and areas to improve. She has made sure that pupils' progress is not hindered detrimentally by making sure that pupils meet with outstanding teaching, especially in Years 2 and 4, so that good progress over their time in school is ensured.

The curriculum provides a good balance of relevant and interesting themes that are planned to motivate pupils and broaden their horizons. Further improvements are planned to ensure that a precise record is kept of the skills pupils develop as they move through the school. Whole-school mathematics days and science challenge events are thoroughly enjoyed and have a very good impact on pupils' understanding of working as a team and of community effort. Events such as the International Cafe when parents and visitors from culturally diverse backgrounds share their language and food have a good impact on pupils' learning about cultures other than their own

A key strength of the school is the outstanding pastoral care for each pupil. This care is exemplified in the way that all adults work together to ensure that all pupils, regardless of any difficulties or disabilities, are able to take full advantage of all that the school has to offer. Pupils are known exceptionally well by all staff and any unhappiness or difficulty in learning quickly noted and appropriate strategies put in place. Each pupil is well aware of the targets they have agreed with their teacher to help them improve their work. They try hard to achieve them.

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

Staff morale is high with a corporate desire to provide the best for all pupils and a willingness to pursue this. Monitoring and development of teaching and learning by the headteacher are rigorous and have brought about good improvement since the last inspection but it is not regular enough to bring about further improvement at a good rate. The enthusiasm, monitoring and purchase of new resources by the ICT coordinator has had an excellent impact on the use of ICT and the resulting raised standards. The special educational needs coordinator provides good leadership and management for the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for pupils at the early stages of learning English. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. The teaching and learning team work very effectively together to check rigorously on each pupil's progress so that, if necessary, each child has special provision to help them achieve as well as possible.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Many governors are relatively new to their role. They have identified the need for all to develop their knowledge further of how to interpret school data which show pupils' progress. The school promotes community cohesion within its own and the local community very effectively and has developed links with schools in other countries. It has evaluated its actions with the result, for example, that the links with schools in other countries are to be developed further through the internet. Safeguarding procedures are robust, updated regularly and known by all.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
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	2

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Links with parents are outstanding and contribute significantly to the good progress children make. Parents have many good things to say about the provision: 'My child fell in love with the school immediately and settled in quickly.' Another wrote, 'I am very impressed with Nursery and Reception Year Staff and pleased with my child's progress.'

Children have a good start to their school life when they join the Nursery classes. A key feature of the Early Years Foundation Stage is the highly effective teamwork.

Assessment is very rigorous and precise and guides the planning for exciting activities matched to children's needs. Consequently, children make good progress in all areas of learning. A particularly good feature is the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills through well taught short daily sessions for letter sounds (phonics) and carefully planned activities to develop knowledge such as counting. Currently, due to building work, children are not able to use the outside area as much as the school would like.

Children make good progress in developing their personal qualities. They play well together and help each other willingly to tidy up. They enjoy choosing their activities and have good fun, for example, using diggers in the sand tray like the builders on site. They behave well, for example, when Nursery children share books with Year 2 and Reception with Year 4. Their welfare needs are met well. Induction procedures are excellent. Staff, children and their parents have met at pre-school provision and some have visited the 'open sessions' in the Nursery every fortnight prior to joining the class.

On entry, children's levels of skill and knowledge are broadly below those expected for their age. However, this 'broadly below' picture masks that there are more children than is typically found at both ends of the ability spectrum and in some groups and some years, there are great differences in overall levels of skill and knowledge. Additionally, a few children start at Nursery speaking little or no English. Importantly, because assessment is so precise and staff know children extremely well, all make at least good progress from their starting points. In most years, at the end of their time in Reception, almost all children attain the levels expected for their age. In some years, a good number of children exceed these.

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

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Parents and carers hold very positive about the school. Very few parents were in disagreement with the 13 aspects included in the questionnaire. A very small number of parents had reservations that the school would take account of their concerns and suggestions. Inspectors found that the links with parents and carers are outstanding and that there are many ways for them to put forward their concerns and suggestions. Evidence seen by the inspection team shows that parental concerns are taken seriously and dealt with quickly. Suggestions are welcomed and the school tries hard to incorporate these into school planning and/or parents' and carers' events such as Partnership Days.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Felix Roman Catholic Primary School, Haverhill 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 88 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 195 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	73	83	15	17	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	69	78	19	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	67	77	20	23	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	68	78	17	20	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	73	83	14	16	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	68	77	19	22	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	66	75	22	25	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)	51	60	32	38	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	65	74	22	25	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	58	69	24	29	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	63	29	33	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	68	77	18	20	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	77	88	10	11	1	1	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.



15 March 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of St Felix Roman Catholic Primary School, Haverhill, CB9 9DE

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for sharing your thoughts and ideas about it. This helped us to make our judgements about your school.

You make good progress and attain high standards.

You all enjoy school very much and feel happy and safe.

Your behaviour is good and sometimes outstanding, and you work and play together very happily.

You are well taught and your lessons are fun and interesting.

There is good leadership and management to help your school to become even better.

You are extremely well looked after.

The school works very effectively with your parents to make sure your education is successful.

We think there are two main areas where the school can improve.

Your handwriting could be better if you were taught a particular style and given time to practise.

Occasionally, teaching is satisfactory rather than good and we have asked your headteacher to make sure that you have at least good teaching all the time.

Your school is successful, not only because of what the adults bring to it, but also because of your contributions. You are very positive about learning and we were impressed with your good manners and how welcoming you are to visitors.

Thank you again for your help and all good wishes for your continued success.

Yours sincerely

Cheryl Thompson

Lead inspector

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