

St Catherine's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124941
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	340688
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2009
Reporting inspector	David Collard

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	264
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tom Bull
Headteacher	Stephanie Gibson
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils, the school improvement partner and some parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of pupils' books, policy and procedure documents and the school development plan, and scrutinised the responses from staff and pupil questionnaires and 65 parental questionnaires.

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

- whether the variations in pupils' progress over the last five years have been eliminated so that both attainment and academic achievement have improved
- whether the better results in the 2009 national tests are likely to be sustained into the future
- how well the school has analysed its own performance and how this has been used to develop the correct priorities.

Information about the school

This average-sized school serves its local area. Almost all pupils come from a White British background and no pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high, as is the proportion of those with statements of special educational needs. This is because there is a Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) Centre attached to the school. This unit caters for pupils with early speech and language delay and mostly for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage or Years 1 and 2. In the rest of the school the main needs are linked to specific language-learning difficulties. Children start their Early Years Foundation Stage in the attached Nursery class and most continue on into the Reception class.

In the last seven years there have been many changes of headteacher as well as in the senior leadership team. The present headteacher has been at the school for two years, while the assistant headteachers have only been in post for one year.

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

While the school provides a satisfactory quality of education it has, after a period of very significant turbulence, now turned a corner in its development. This has resulted in aspects of pupils' outcomes which are good but some that need further improvement. St Catherine's is a calm and orderly school due in most part to the pupils' good attitudes, behaviour and their enjoyment of learning. This is evident both in lessons and around the school. The success of the headteacher's determination to improve pupils' achievement and to drive the school forward have resulted in a steep rise in test results and a staff who now have faith in their own ability. This all indicates a good capacity to improve and bodes well for the future.

Relationships throughout the school are good. Staff and pupils work well together and parents are very supportive. How well this has been achieved is seen in the typical parental comments such as, 'My daughter looks forward to school and enjoys telling us about it.' Pupils are looked after and cared for well. Robust support systems ensure that any individual problems are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Children get a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They settle well and, because of good teaching, enjoy playing and learning. The outdoor provision here is a focus for development as the equipment is rather 'tired' and in the Nursery area is cramped when using wheeled toys. Through the rest of the school teaching is satisfactory and, from the school's own monitoring over the longer term, it is clear that, while pupils' progress is satisfactory, it is now more consistently so. This is confirmed in national test results. For some years and until 2008, in both Year 2 and Year 6, standards were low. 2009 unvalidated national results, as well as the school's own data for those in the present Year 6, demonstrate improved levels of progress and broadly average attainment. While teaching is satisfactory, there is variability ranging from a significant proportion of good teaching to some isolated pockets of teaching which do not provide the right levels of challenge. The school is working well to address the weaknesses, such as in target-setting, planning and assessment, through careful monitoring and further training to raise levels of expertise. The many teaching assistants provide some good but variable support. For example, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress against their own individual targets because of the support they receive, particularly from specialist teachers and assistants. This ensures that their small steps in learning are carefully evaluated and refined. More generally in class, teaching assistants are not always deployed well enough to make best use of their expertise.

Now the leadership structure has stabilised, this has enabled more rigorous monitoring of the school's provision. With the support of good governance, the headteacher and

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senior staff have gained a realistic view about the school's true position. They understand that there is still work to do to make the school as effective as possible but have a dogged determination to do so. They have started to put effective plans into action to eliminate these relative weaknesses and so ensure pupils make the best possible progress in both their personal and academic endeavours.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2010:
- ensure the academic progress of pupils throughout the school is good by:
 - ensuring teachers monitor pupils' progress against their targets and take effective action where progress is slow
 - adjusting planning so that it supports each lesson and moves pupils on from where they are to where they need to be
 - ensuring assessment provides pupils with constructive feedback so they know how to improve.
- improve the impact of teaching assistants so that they are able to provide effective support by:
 - deploying them more effectively during lessons
 - providing training where it is needed
 - using their expertise to provide the best value for money.
- improve the outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that it fully develops children's progress in all areas of learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Historically, pupils' standards were too low in English, mathematics and science by the time they left at the end of Year 6. This situation has been reversed. Demonstrable improvement can be seen in national test results and this trend is set to continue with a good proportion of pupils in the present Year 6 already reaching the expected level for the end of this year. There is a similar picture for those presently in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, pupils are being adequately prepared for their future lives beyond school. While progress is significantly better at the top end of each key stage, variability in the past has meant that this has not been the case in all year groups and a small amount of this inconsistency still remains. Where this happens the level of challenge is not sufficiently high so that pupils cover ground they already know. For instance, in one lesson in the juniors, pupils already working above their age-expected level were expected to name two-dimensional shapes when they already had a good view about the special properties of these. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, both in the speech and language unit and in the rest of the school, make good progress. This is due to the good, but as importantly consistent, attention that is paid to checking on how well they are doing and refining the work that they are given in light of these assessments. A number go on to reach national average

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levels of attainment but from much lower starting points.

Pupils' enjoyment of their schooling is demonstrated from the mostly positive comments in their questionnaires such as 'Our school is great.' There are a few pupils who say that they would like more help and that they get bored sometimes, but these are in the minority. Pupils feel safe and secure and understand how to keep themselves safe out of school. Equally, they understand about healthy lifestyles and the importance of physical exercise. The school's excellent survey of their participation rates in sporting activities shows how much impact this is having on their well-being. Pupils actively support local, national and international events, with one class having regular contact with a school in Africa. This is all helping develop a wider understanding of different cultures and beliefs, but there is room to extend these opportunities.

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	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	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 plan work designed to provide challenge, interest and motivation. In general most lessons provide the right level of expectation balancing the need to develop skills, knowledge and understanding. Ways are found to link different subjects together,

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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although sometimes this is at the expense of developing the highest levels of challenge to all abilities. At its best, teaching provides pupils with the chance to use previously acquired expertise such as was seen in one lesson where pupils were writing storybooks for younger children. The teacher encouraged the class to discover interesting types of language, illustrations and a relevant story line. Individual planning shows different work for different abilities, but this is not always linked to assessments or pupils' targets so that pupils can see whether they have improved. The teaching assistants work conscientiously with pupils they support but are not always used to the best advantage. For example, in some lessons the assistants sit for long periods during whole-class discussions without being involved and this limits their effectiveness. Younger pupils in the speech and language unit are supported very well. Older pupils get highly effective specialist support but, when waiting for this, their time is not used well as the work they are given does not help them build up new skills and knowledge.

The satisfactory curriculum has a good range of other activities such as the popular 'Wake and Shake', sporting clubs and visits. Pupils say, 'There is a lot to do.' The care and welfare that pupils receive is of good quality. Playground incidences are few and pupils say there is very little bullying. Pupils are being encouraged to take more responsibility through a reflective programme of self-awareness, the use of playground buddies and the school council.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's own high expectation about what pupils at the school are capable of achieving has had to overcome some resistance to change and to build the self-esteem of staff. This has not been helped by some key staff changes which have all slowed down more rapid improvement. However, in the last year much has stabilised and, with the appointment of a strong senior team, the school has been able to drive forward developments. The improved quality of teaching, higher expectations of teachers and the professional development of the whole team, has ensured that opportunities for groups of pupils are similar and that there is no discrimination. Partnerships are strong, as are the relationships with the parent body as a whole. There are one or two individual concerns but most of these relate to the past. In addition, governors have become much more proactive and are helping hold the school accountable for its progress. They have a good view about both what is working well and what needs

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changing. A good example is their recent analysis of staff provision and how this can be made more effective. There are also advanced plans to improve the environment of the school, particularly within the Early Years Foundation Stage. Safeguarding procedures are robust and all relevant training has been completed. Risk assessments have highlighted some minor improvements that were needed and these have been or are in the process of being completed. Plans are now underway to make the building itself more inviting to help the whole community see it as central to the local area. The school has looked at its processes to develop community cohesion and is using these to build up pupils' better understanding of not only the connections with those close to the school, but also further afield.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	2
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	3
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

From below the age-expected levels at the start of their schooling, children make good progress through the Nursery and Reception classes. They start Year 1 with standards broadly in line with the nationally expected levels. This is because assessments and profiling ensures that teaching is good and plans are laid out precisely for the children's needs. The provision actively encourages positive attitudes to learning, behaviour and play. There is a good balance between the activities developed by teachers and those that children choose for themselves. The assessments show that in all areas children make improvement, although to a slightly lesser extent in early writing skills. Teaching assistants are deployed well, not only to support but also to undertake observations and assessments. All this provides an accurate picture of the progress that each individual is

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making and information that can be shared with parents. Welfare is good, such as when using tools and equipment or the large toys and other equipment. The outdoor area is in need of refurbishment. Many of the toys are 'well-used' and in the Nursery there is only a small area where children can use bikes and scooters. Consequently, development of the important physical aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, whilst good, is not quite as strong. Good leadership ensures that further improvements are being developed and based on a thorough analysis of need.

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

Parents are in general agreement that they are happy with their child's experience at school. There is common agreement that children enjoy school, feel safe and that the school is led effectively. There is some concern about the general levels of progress that their children make and about whether all individual needs are catered for. These views reflect the findings of the inspection particularly about different levels of progress that pupils make.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Catherine's 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 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 264 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	66	20	33	0	0	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	40	66	20	33	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	41	34	56	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	56	20	33	6	10	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	32	52	28	46	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	46	30	49	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	48	32	52	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)	30	49	24	39	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	44	28	46	6	10	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	34	32	52	3	5	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	38	29	48	6	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	31	51	26	43	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	62	20	33	3	5	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

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

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

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

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



3 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Catherine's Primary School, Bletchingley RH1 4PP

Thank you for making us welcome during our recent visit. We enjoyed talking to so many of you and seeing you at work. I particularly enjoyed watching your 'Wake and Shake' session. It made a good start to our day. We have said that yours is a satisfactory school but we can see that it is improving rapidly. As I promised some of you, I have included the main points of our report below.

- You told us you enjoyed school and that you were making the right sort of progress. We agree. The provisional results of the 2009 national tests show that standards have risen quite dramatically and look set to continue this year. Keep it up ' you have a lot to live up to!
- You told us that you thought behaviour was good. We agree with this. We can see that you try and look after one another well. You know how to stay safe, fit and healthy. You are proud of your sporting achievements and rightly so.
- We have said that your teachers work hard to try and provide the right opportunities. While most are satisfactory, some of these activities work better than others, so we have asked that all your teachers make sure they plan the most challenging lessons. This will ensure you are given the chance to have targets that help you know what to improve and to make sure all the other assistants can be involved in this.
- The youngest children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. You have probably noticed that their toys outside are a little worn out so we said these should be replaced and a bigger area provided for the children in the Nursery to ride around in. Perhaps you might be able to help by suggesting what sort of toys to buy.
- Your headteacher knows what to do to make things even better and, along with other staff, have got many exciting plans for the future. You can help in this by suggesting ways that you think would help.

Finally, we hope you continue to work hard and make the best possible progress.

Yours sincerely,

David Collard

Lead inspector

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