

St Catherine's Catholic Primary School, Littlehampton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126040
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	340901
Inspection dates	27–28 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Wendy Forbes

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	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Bedford
Headteacher	Gillian Howell
Date of previous school inspection	28 April 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Nine lessons were observed and all teachers were seen. Inspectors visited all classrooms on a learning walk to sample displays, behaviour and resources, and held meetings with governors, staff and a group of pupils. Inspectors examined pupils' books and school documents, including the school improvement plans, safety records and assessment information. They analysed 64 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, together with those completed by 65 pupils and 6 staff. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

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- ? the achievement of pupils, particularly that of more able pupils, to ascertain whether teaching and the curriculum are challenging enough
- ? the work the school is doing to eliminate variations in attainment between cohorts, different groups of learners and between different key subjects
- ? the progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 2
- ? the impact of assessment and pupil tracking systems in raising achievement across the whole school, especially in writing and mathematics
- ? the effectiveness of leaders and managers since the last inspection in driving improvement.

Information about the school

St Catherine's is a smaller than average primary school. Whilst most pupils are White British, the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups has risen since the last inspection. Over one third of pupils are of Polish, Indian or Filipino origin. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average, with the largest group being those with moderate learning difficulties, particularly in speech and language. The school has been through a significant period of change. At the time of inspection, there was a substantive headteacher and the school was without a deputy headteacher. The school has improved facilities and now has a new kitchen area to provide daily school lunches and a special feature spiritual Prayer Garden to reflect the school's Catholic ethos. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools, Activemark and Autism Awareness Awards.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Catherine's is a satisfactory school, but one that is improving under the very positive leadership of the headteacher. Her staff and a sound governing body support her vision for the school wholeheartedly. The impact of significant staffing changes and subsequent disruption to learning over time which led to a legacy of underachievement is still apparent in a number of Key Stage 2 classes. As a consequence, the progress of these pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics, has been slower. They still have much to catch up in their basic skills. However, the drive, ambition and tenacity of the headteacher, with support from staff, have already ensured the eradication of some previously identified weaknesses, for example in teaching which is now good, and have secured improvements in attainment. As a result, previously low attainment rose significantly in 2009 and is now average.

Effective systems monitor the quality of teaching and learning as well as track pupils' achievement. This focus on raising standards has helped to sustain more recent improvements, ensuring that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make at least satisfactory progress. Self-evaluation is accurate and honest and has already led to improvements, particularly in reading. Because of the improving standards, strong leadership of the headteacher and the support and commitment of the staff, including subject leaders, the school has developed the satisfactory capacity to improve further.

The school is a happy, settled and welcoming community. Behaviour is good in class and around school. Pupils say they are well cared for, knowing adults will always help them. This means that the vast majority of pupils enjoy learning and hold positive views about the school. Pupils' spiritual development has improved significantly since the last inspection. The Catholic ethos is evident, with daily opportunities for reflection provided which help to promote good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The vast majority of parents are supportive, valuing the high level of pastoral care, guidance and support provided for their children. A typical comment was: 'The school really cares; everyone has time for our children.'

Teachers have excellent relationships with their pupils providing interesting, fun activities which ensure they have achievable challenges. These result in high levels of enjoyment and sustained concentration. However, information on pupils' progress does not always match their capabilities well enough, particularly for high attaining pupils in writing and mathematics. The school's development of community cohesion is only merely satisfactory as it has yet to promote pupils' national and global awareness beyond its own community.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- ? Continue to raise standards in English and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - - work is better matched to the needs of all groups of learners, especially the most able, in English, particularly writing, and in mathematics and matches the high standards already achieved in reading.
- Accelerate pupils' progress especially at Key Stage 2, by:
 - - using assessment information more effectively in lesson planning to meet more closely the needs of pupils of differing ability, particularly higher attaining pupils
- ? Raise pupils' awareness and understanding of the cultural diversity of the United Kingdom through developing links with other schools and institutions that have greater ethnic diversity.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The quality of pupils' learning is satisfactory overall. Pupils enjoy being in school and appreciate its caring and inclusive ethos. They respond well to the value staff place on their achievements, as evidenced by their positive attitudes to learning. For example, in Year 6, pupils thoroughly enjoyed their literacy lesson where they had to develop a story into a play script. The lesson was conducted at a brisk pace, explanations were clear, the teacher's subject knowledge was good and there were very high expectations. In a good Year 4/5 science lesson, pupils enthusiastically experimented with sponges, heaters and dryers, carrying out a fair test in evaporation.

By the end of Year 2, pupils reach above average standards and progress is good. However, because of a legacy of underachievement in Years 4, 5 and 6, pupils have had to catch up in their basic skills and, as a result, by the end of Year 6, attainment is average. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress and their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do as well as their peers because of the good care and support they receive.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and feel safe and say that bullying or poor behaviour is a rare occurrence. They are eager to participate in class discussions and listen carefully to adults. Pupils are aware of the world of work and are soundly prepared for their futures. Through the work associated with the national awards, they have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and conservation issues, through first-hand experience of growing vegetables in the school's garden, as well as of recycling. Pupils make a good contribution through the important roles they play within the school and wider community, improving their school by acting as members of the School Council, table and lunchtime buddies and class monitors. They enjoy opportunities to help others by visiting local care homes to perform at Christmas and by raising funds for charity. Despite the school's very best efforts and rigorous procedures, attendance remains average because a small minority of pupils take holidays in term time.

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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?

Teaching is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teachers have good skills in managing their pupils and, as a result, relationships are excellent. Reading and writing are well taught and have brought about considerable improvements. Teachers work very hard to ensure that learning is engaging and activities are fun, frequently using exciting and interesting texts, pictures, props or costumes to stimulate pupils' interest. Leaders' support has ensured that teachers have developed their skills, and school monitoring records show clear improvement. However, the use of assessment information to inform daily planning is not consistent across the school. As a result, not all pupils make the progress of which they are capable, particularly the most able, because some activities are not always sufficiently well matched. Most pupils have individual learning targets for improvement and are beginning to be involved in the assessment of their learning so that they have a clear picture how they can improve their work.

The school offers a satisfactory, broad and varied curriculum based on the core skills. Although pupils enjoy curriculum theme days such as Tudor Day and specialist provision

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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in music, sport and French, curriculum activities are not always sufficiently well matched to ensure all pupils make good progress in their learning, particularly the more able. There are many opportunities for pupils to participate in good extra-curricular activities, including a wide range of sporting activities such as rugby, football, netball and basketball, which have made a significant contribution to both the school's promotion of healthy lifestyles and the Active Mark award. School staff are committed to the ethos of support and care for all pupils. Pastoral care is effective in supporting pupils' learning. Skilled teaching assistants ensure that those who need help are included well in lessons. Adults do much to reinforce pupils' self-confidence and to promote positive attitudes to learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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?

Despite the lack of a permanent and complete leadership team in recent times, the headteacher has worked with the support of staff to ensure that effective systems are in place to bring about significant improvements. The classroom monitoring programme has already gone some way to ironing out the previous inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and use of assessment. However, this has not yet ensured that standards are high enough in writing or mathematics, nor that all pupils, particularly the most able, reach their full potential. The school tracks the performance of different groups of pupils, closely setting challenging targets focused on school improvement. Senior leaders guide staff so that equality of opportunity and inclusion are sound, but recognise that occasionally, although improving, the most able pupils do not always do as well as other groups of learners.

Staff and governors are developing their capacity to hold the school to account and are united in their commitment to help the school improve. The success of their various strategies and interventions is only recently becoming evident as staffing becomes more settled and the role of governors and subject leaders develops and improves. The school's systems and procedures in child protection ensure that safeguarding is good. The school's relationship with parents is good. They speak highly of the school and the way it cares for their children. Well-developed support systems within the school are complemented by a good range of partnerships with outside specialists to support the needs of vulnerable pupils. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Nevertheless, the school acknowledges that it needs to develop further

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partnerships and understanding of the wider national and global communities.

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	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	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

Children settle very quickly in a safe, secure and welcoming environment. Overall, they enter with skills that are low compared to those expected for their age, particularly in speech and language. Good care, teaching, and leadership and management all help to ensure that children make good progress especially in knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development and communication skills. Progress in reading, writing, and calculations is slower. However, effective systems are in place to raise attainment and improve provision in these areas, particularly for those children who are at the early stages of learning English or who are in need of help, who are well supported by a good curriculum and daily phonic sessions. By the end of Reception, the majority are still working towards, and some above, the skills expected for their age.

Children explore and learn effectively through a good range of activities indoors, however, outdoor learning opportunities have yet to complement this purposeful indoor provision. Children are safe and secure, and adults promote children's welfare effectively. They are well behaved, working and playing sensibly together. Effective assessment procedures are used to measure and track children's progress. Many activities require children to adapt them to their own use, making sure they use their imagination and initiative. Learning is made fun. Magical ?awe and wonder? moments were seen as children enjoyed the excitement of looking for a hidden map and buried treasure left by ?pirates?. Fun-packed moments of enthusiasm were seen as children created a message in a bottle, played with finger puppets, looked for sea animals in a

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water tray and giggled their way through the eclectic range of exciting and imaginative activities

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 and carers who returned questionnaires or who spoke to the inspection team were overwhelmingly positive about the school. Overall, parents' and carers' views reflect the inspection findings. The vast majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school, particularly in their praise of the headteacher and staff. A very small number of parents expressed individual concerns about aspects of the school. Inspectors found no evidence to substantiate any individual concerns, although these were summarised and reported to the school without identifying any individual.

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 64 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 138 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	63	21	33	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	64	23	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	34	53	30	47	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	42	32	50	5	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	34	53	27	42	3	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	47	30	47	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	45	34	53	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)	20	31	37	59	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	42	35	55	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	44	32	50	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	36	34	53	4	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	30	47	31	48	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	56	27	42	1	2	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.



29 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Catherine's Catholic (Aided) Primary School, Littlehampton BN17 6HL

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed our visit, and were pleased that you are happy in your school. You behave well in class and in the playground. Your school keeps you safe. We enjoyed your singing in assembly and the good quality art displayed around the school. You told us that you enjoy the activities your teachers plan for you, particularly the school concerts, art, music and physical education as well as sports clubs.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education, which means it does some things well but some things need to be improved. All the adults care a great deal about you, and support you well. The children in Reception and Years 1, 2 and 3 make good progress in their learning. Because many older children in Years 4, 5 and 6 have had lots of disruption in their learning over a period of time, they have not made such good progress as the rest of you. So we have asked your teachers to do the following things to help your school improve further:

- find ways to make sure that those of you who sometimes find parts of lessons a bit too easy are challenged to reach even higher standards.
 - use information on how well each of you is doing, and then make sure that you each, particularly older pupils, receive work that accurately matches your particular needs so that you make faster progress
 - help you to find out more about different lifestyles in Britain and in other countries.
- You can play your part by working hard and making sure that everyone does the very best they can.' We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Forbes Lead inspector

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