

St Catherine's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126432
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	340979
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2009
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Suzanne Tewkesbury
Headteacher	Mrs Brenda Martin
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2006
School address	Davenwood Swindon Wiltshire SN2 7LL
Telephone number	01793 822699
Fax number	01793 332021
Email address	head@stcatherines.swindon.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons, and held meetings with a governor, staff, parents and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at various papers, including the school development plan, policies and procedures relating to safeguarding and child protection, the school's data to show the progress pupils are making and management monitoring files. They also analysed pupil and staff questionnaires and questionnaires returned by 84 parents.

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

- whether boys are making adequate progress
- whether more able pupils are being challenged sufficiently, particularly in Years 1 and 2 and in mathematics in Years 3 to 6
- the reasons for the declining standards in the national assessments at both key stages
- whether the lack of continuity in management is having a significant effect on the rate of progress of the school.

Information about the school

A very large majority of pupils at this average-sized primary school are from White British backgrounds. The remainder represent a wide range of other heritages. A few do not speak English at home, though very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average and most of these have moderate learning difficulties. Rather more pupils join or leave the school at times other than the usual than one would expect in a school of this size. The school runs a breakfast club and from September this year has provided accommodation for a privately run pre-school, which is inspected separately. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made in a Reception class. There has been some disruption to staffing in the recent past as the deputy headteacher left recently and has not yet been replaced. Three other teachers are on maternity leave, including the senior teacher.

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 school has moved forward well since its last inspection. It has a number of significant strengths. Perhaps the most striking is the excellent quality of care provided for the pupils. Each child is highly valued and known extremely well by all adults. Several have been enabled to overcome considerable barriers to their learning. For instance, the parents of a child who joined from Poland speaking very little English encapsulated the views of many when they said, 'The school supports my child's learning and gives us a lot of help, support and suggestions about how to help my child and he absolutely loves going to school.' These levels of care have resulted in the pupils behaving extremely well. They support each other and as a parent typically said, 'My children feel that they are part of the St Catherine's family. Older children look out for little ones, which is very reassuring.'

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and reflects the strong Catholic ethos of the school. Pupils reflect deeply on their place in the world and the contribution that they can make to it. The Sanctuary is well used and much appreciated by pupils as a place where they can go to reflect and pray.

Improvements have come about through rigorous monitoring and clear plans for development. There has been a consequent improvement in the quality of teaching, which has resulted in pupils' accelerated progress. A good example of the effectiveness of initiatives taken is in the measures taken to improve boys' performance. For example, resources are planned specifically to appeal to boys and they often work in mixed-gender groups. Boys are now learning as well as girls in lessons.

Despite the current lack of continuity in leadership, good initiatives have been taken to reduce the impact of this. For example, the local authority has linked the school with another, whose coordinators for literacy and numeracy are experienced and are supporting the newly appointed leaders of these two key areas. The school has funded the appointment of a recently retired headteacher, introduced through the diocese, to support the headteacher. This has enabled the headteacher to continue her focus on raising standards. The school has built an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses, which is shared very well with governors and staff. However, participation in the process of evaluation does not involve all staff. Despite this, the school is well placed to continue to improve.

Standards have dropped a little in the national assessments in both Year 2 and Year 6 in recent years. There are two main reasons for this. Attainment on entry, which was judged as being in line with expectations in earlier inspections, has declined and is now significantly below expectations. Also, the school now has a significant minority of pupils

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joining in all year groups who do not speak English. Although these pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress, they do not have time to catch up to expected levels by the time of the assessments.

Standards by the time pupils leave are broadly average, though those in mathematics have been rather weaker than those in English and science. There are a couple of key factors that explain this. Teachers do not always take account of exactly what pupils have already learnt and are therefore not always giving them appropriate work to extend their learning. In the introductions to some mathematics lessons, pupils sit for too long on the carpet, when some have already understood the task for the day, while others are still struggling. This slows learning, particularly for the more able.

The quality of teaching is now good, though teachers' use of assessment to aid pupils' learning is satisfactory. Good use is made of assessments to measure pupils' progress and to identify any in danger of falling behind, who are then provided with good extra support to help them catch up. However, teachers do not always use assessment information to plan what pupils need to learn next. This means that they cannot then support them so effectively in improving their standards when they mark their work.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and improve pupils' progress in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that teachers have a clear knowledge of pupils' previous learning so that they can take them on progressively
 - ensuring that tasks set in lessons are closely matched to the range of abilities in each class
 - ensuring that time is used to best effect so that pupils do not sit listening when either they do not understand or when they have already mastered the topic.
- Involve pupils more fully in the process of evaluating the success of their learning by:
 - ensuring that they know how well they are doing
 - setting them clear next steps in learning
 - ensuring that teachers make reference to these next steps when marking work
 - enabling pupils to monitor their progress in relation to these next steps.

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

Pupils enjoy their lessons as there is a good range of resources and activities for them. For instance, the Year 6 teacher has made conjunction fans, which enthuse the pupils, particularly the boys, and help them to make faster progress in writing. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to engage the pupils. For instance, pupils in Year 1 were engrossed with a game on the whiteboard where they had to match number bonds to ten to complete a jigsaw. Paired discussions are also used well, as was seen in a Year 4 mathematics lesson where they were used successfully to embed learning. Pupils with

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special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same progress as their classmates as they are supported well. All pupils who filled in questionnaires agreed that they learn a lot in lessons.

Pupils spoken to say they feel safe in school and they learn how to keep themselves safe in potentially hazardous situations, such as when using the internet. They take plenty of exercise and most eat sensibly. They take on a wide range of tasks within the school, such as being play leaders, and there is some good involvement in the local community, with children going to sing in old people's homes, for instance. Pupils' attendance has improved year on year for the last three years and is now just a little above average.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	1
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

There are a number of general strengths to the quality of teaching. For instance, there are very good relationships between adults and pupils and this encourages pupils to try their best. Teachers' questioning skills are good, ensuring that they are extending thinking through these questions. The school has put in place a programme for those pupils with particular gifts and talents, some of this through good links with a local

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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secondary school. However, there are times in lessons when more able pupils are not provided with sufficiently challenging work, one boy saying that his work was 'easy, peasy!'

Good links are made between subjects so that pupils get plenty of opportunities to practise their basic skills, particularly in writing, across the curriculum. Information and communication technology is also used well to support learning and the school is well equipped with laptops. A start has been made at redesigning the curriculum around a topic-based approach, but this is in its early days. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of trips and visitors into 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	3
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?

Despite the recent lack of continuity in leadership, the pace of progress has not slowed. All staff, on their questionnaires, said that they are proud to be a part of what the school is trying to achieve and they feel involved in this, although a few do not feel that they are sufficiently involved in the process of self-evaluation. Governors share the determination to continue the forward momentum and are involved well in supporting the school.

The whole ethos of the school is based around the uniqueness of the individual, and equality of opportunity is high on the agenda. However, the school recognises that that the more able are not consistently reaching their potential. The small number of pupils from other heritages are very much an integral part of the school and racial incidents are minor and very rare.

At the time of the inspection, the procedures for checking all adults and visitors were rigorous and all but one parent who responded to the questionnaire regards the school as keeping their children safe. There is a comprehensive policy for health and safety, although some of this has not yet been put into practice in terms of written records.

There is a good knowledge of the local community and the school promotes good links with it, the Member of Parliament being questioned by pupils on local issues, for instance. The school also has very valuable links with the wider world, sponsoring two children in an orphanage in Sri Lanka.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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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
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	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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the Reception class with levels of skills and knowledge well below those expected. They make good progress during the year, but are still working at below-average levels when they join Year 1. Their good progress is due to the good provision made for them and, in particular, the skills of the adults in developing their language. Children are motivated, confident and interested because of the independence they are given. They are expected to do jobs around the classroom and they are proud to do these and take responsibility well. They behave well and share and cooperate sensibly. There is a good balance between activities led by an adult and those children choose for themselves, and good use is made of the spacious and well-equipped outdoor areas. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led well, though staff have not yet carried out their own evaluation of provision. A good start has been made at assessing what children have achieved, though this is not being used to set next steps in learning for them. There are close relationships with parents, who speak highly of the provision.

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

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Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents in their questionnaires and those who spoke to inspectors are very positive about the school. A few expressed worries about the quality of teaching, though the judgement of the inspection is that teaching is good overall. One or two were concerned that action is not taken when parental anxieties are brought to the school's attention. However, a far greater number of parents complimented the school on solving problems rapidly and working closely with them.

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 84 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 201 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	52	33	39	6	7	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	50	60	31	37	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	32	50	60	4	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	37	46	55	4	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	27	32	53	63	3	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	36	46	55	6	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	54	32	38	4	5	1	1
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)	31	37	43	51	5	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	35	43	51	7	8	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	40	40	48	5	6	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	26	46	55	10	12	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	35	42	39	46	6	7	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	43	44	52	2	2	2	2

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.



10 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Catherine's Catholic Primary School, Swindon SN2 7LL

Thank you so much for welcoming us so warmly to your school when we visited a while ago. We were really impressed with how well behaved and polite you were. It is always good to see older pupils caring for younger ones so well. I greatly enjoyed watching a little bit of the Infant Nativity and the impromptu singing at lunchtime. We spoke to many of you and you told us a great many things that you enjoy about school. All adults take care of you exceptionally well and they are setting you really good examples, which you are following. We think yours is a good school.

We think that you make really good use of your Sanctuary and that you are growing up into responsible young people who want to do something to help in this world. You clearly enjoy your lessons and we were impressed with how hard you work. You are making good progress and reach average standards by the time you leave. Your good progress is because you are being taught well and the teachers make sure that their lessons are varied and interesting. Although you do not have a deputy headteacher at present, your headteacher, supported well by the governors and the teachers, has good plans to make your school even better.

There are just two things that we have suggested should be improved.

- The standard of your work in mathematics is not as good as in other subjects. We have suggested that teachers need to make sure that you always receive work that matches your abilities and that you do not spend too long sitting and listening in lessons, but have more time to work at your different activities.
- In your questionnaires, several of you said that you do not always know how well you are doing. We agree and have suggested that teachers need to give you better information about this and set you very precise next steps in learning to help you improve your work.

I know you will help by continuing to work hard and do your best.

Yours sincerely

John D Eadie

Lead Inspector

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