



St John's Catholic Primary School, Banbury

Inspection report

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 123181
LEA Oxfordshire
Inspection number 292604
Inspection dates 27 - 28 February 2007
Reporting inspector Ms Nicola Davies

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

Type of School	Primary	School address	Avocet Way
School category	Voluntary aided		Chatsworth Drive Banbury
Age range of pupils	4-11		OX16 9YA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01295 263740
Number on roll	289	Fax number	01295 264029
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of Governors	Father Mervyn Tower
		Headteacher	Mr Kevin O'Connor
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2002		

Age group	Inspection Date(s)	Inspection No.
4-11	27 - 28 February 2007	292604

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This Catholic primary school in Banbury serves the parish of St John the Evangelist. The school includes pupils from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, although the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is significantly below average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage but the school has noted an increase in the number of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds, including a few who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Most children have attended pre-school and they enter the Foundation Stage with skills which are a little above average for their age.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This popular and welcoming school provides a good education for its pupils and is very highly valued by parents. 'Warm', 'supportive', and 'caring' are typical of the ways they describe the education the school provides, which they rightly recognise helps each one of their children to become 'well-rounded, considerate and caring individuals'.

Good teaching, well organised areas for learning and interesting activities linked to the real world give children a good start in the Early Years classes. The development of the school's early years education is one example of improvements which have been made at the school since the previous inspection. Another is the teaching of writing, a recent focus, which has helped pupils to do well in this area. Overall, pupils reach standards which are well above average by the time they leave the school and achievement is good.

Throughout the school, pupils make good progress as a result of lively teaching and a good, varied curriculum which adds much to their personal development and well being. For example, the wide range of exciting 'extra' activities on offer helps pupils to learn more about themselves and others. Because of the emphasis placed on it through the school's strongly caring ethos, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. As a result, pupils show outstanding awareness of the needs of others and of the advantages they enjoy compared to many other children around the world. Effective care, guidance and support contribute to pupils' well developed academic and personal skills which prepare them well for their move to secondary school.

Leadership and management are good overall. The popular and highly respected headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has very good relationships with both pupils and parents which contribute to parents' overriding feeling that the school is a 'family' which cares for them and their children and welcomes them in every way. The school acts effectively to make necessary improvements, as is shown by the flourishing Foundation Stage or by its prompt action following pupils' surveys and suggestions from parents and the school council. This demonstrates a good capacity to improve. However, the identification of areas for improvement is a weaker aspect of self-evaluation, particularly as the school does not make enough use of target setting to ensure that pupils' progress is the best it can be.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that self-evaluation makes more use of targets for pupils' attainment, in order to ensure that pupils make the best progress they can.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. The standards that they achieve at the end of Year 6 are consistently well above average in English, mathematics and science. Disappointing writing results in 2005 led to a successful whole school focus on writing and in the most recent national tests a much larger proportion of pupils achieved the higher

levels in writing so that almost half achieved the higher levels in English overall.

Inspection evidence indicates that pupils of all abilities are now well challenged in their classes and that their progress is good as a result. Whilst the school has begun to track achievement carefully to ensure that all pupils are making good progress, this information is not yet used to set challenging targets for pupils, in order to ensure that they are making the best possible progress. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils, such as girls and boys.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils behave well and enjoy school life. This is reflected in good levels of attendance. Pupils are keen to participate in clubs and extra activities to develop skills and talents. They are increasingly aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle although the school has identified that this as an area for further development. Pupils show a good awareness of hazards and describe the school as a 'happy and kind' place where pupils from all backgrounds feel safe and included well.

Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities. They volunteer to help the school and enjoy helping to bring about improvements. For example, a successful funding request from the school council to the parents' association has introduced playground games, which pupils enjoy. The impact of pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness can be seen not only in their active involvement in raising impressive sums for charities but also in activities closer to home. For example, pupils came up with the idea of regular litter patrols to reduce the burden on school staff and even the youngest pupils write knowledgeably about how to be understanding of their friends and others. Such thoughtful attitudes mean pupils contribute very well to the school and wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned to present tasks that are well matched to pupils' age and ability, including the good organisation of learning for pupils in mixed-age classes. Teachers provide interesting activities which pupils enjoy. Those with specific needs are fully integrated and well supported. Teaching assistants play a valuable role in classes and when working with small groups. Teachers use computer technology well as a stimulus for learning. Relationships are very good; the working atmosphere is calm and promotes concentration. As a result, pupils make good progress.

The main purpose of the lesson is explained well to pupils so they know what they are working towards. They like it when teachers praise their efforts and enjoy the challenge of teachers' 'must', 'should', or 'could' outcomes for lessons. In some classes, pupils are involved well in judging their own progress although this is not yet consistent across the school. The school recognises the need to ensure that teachers' marking in books is meaningful and consistently tells pupils how they can improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers a full and inclusive curriculum, providing varied and interesting activities which pupils enjoy. The curriculum is well planned with good provision for literacy and numeracy. A recent focus on improving writing has been effective and pupils benefit from good opportunities to use their writing skills widely across the curriculum. Time is allocated for each year group to develop information and communication technology (ICT) skills although the use of these skills in other subjects is not extensive. The Early Years curriculum involves children in purposeful and engaging tasks which prepare them well for the next stage of learning.

Visitors and clubs effectively support the curriculum and extend pupils' experiences and skills. Residential and foreign trips contribute well to pupils' understanding of themselves and others. Older pupils learn French and all pupils have good opportunities to develop musical talents. This has a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment and self-esteem as evidenced by the high quality playing of the school orchestra.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. One parent described this inclusive school as providing an 'education in a loving and caring environment'. This was echoed in the comments of many others and parents are confident that their children are safe and well looked after. Procedures to protect children are robust. These are regularly reviewed and careful assessments are made of activities to minimise any risks to the health and safety of adults and pupils.

The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. Teaching assistants provide good classroom support to raise pupils' standards and self-esteem. Although pupils at the early stages of learning English are few in number, the school has developed good provision to support their progress. The school has good links with outside agencies and works closely with its partner secondary school to promote the very good arrangements to help pupils settle in to their new school. Whilst pastoral guidance is good, the effectiveness of academic guidance is reduced because progress information is not consistently used well to set precise targets for all pupils, to ensure that the progress they make is the best they are capable of.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has introduced effective arrangements for staff to manage and develop subjects or areas of its work. For example, the hard work of senior staff and curriculum co-ordinators has resulted in improvements to writing and to the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage which was identified at the time of the previous inspection. However a weaker area is the use of target setting as a measure for pupils' progress and as a tool to help identify where improvements are needed. Though pupils make good progress, the school lacks a rigorous method of ensuring that the progress made is the best that pupils are capable of.

The dedicated and capable governors make a good contribution to the life of the school. They have put good systems in place which enable them to hold the school to account, although the full impact of these is still developing.

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Annex A to the inspection report

Inspection Judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

Annex A to the inspection report

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interest of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Annex A to the inspection report

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B to the inspection report

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.



13 March 2007

Dear Pupils

St John's Catholic Primary School, Banbury, Avocet Way, Chatsworth Drive, Banbury, OX16 9YA

Thank you so much for helping us with our inspection of your school. You and your parents told us that your school is a friendly and caring place and we could see that this was true. We enjoyed watching and talking to you in lessons and at break times.

We agree with you, your parents, your teachers and your governors that you go to a good school. Part of this is about the good progress that you make in your lessons but it is also about the interesting experiences you have at school and the way that this helps you develop into mature young people. We were particularly impressed with the way the school helps you to understand and help others. It was a pleasure to meet such thoughtful and concerned young people, so well done.

Your headteacher, teachers and all the other adults in the school work very hard to make sure you are all well cared for and educated. They were pleased when they heard we were coming to visit the school, not just because they are proud of you and the school, but also because they welcome ideas about how to make the school even better. This is rather like the ideas you and your school council give them. So we have asked them to make good use of all the information they have about you and the school to set challenging targets, to make sure that you all doing the best you can.

It was lovely to meet all the adults at your school and so many of you. We wish you every success in the future.

Nicola Davies
Lead Inspector