

St Elphege's RC Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102997
Local Authority	Sutton
Inspection number	308190
Inspection date	11 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr T Tamplin
Headteacher	Mrs F Hawkes
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2005
School address	Mollison Drive Roundshaw Wallington SM6 9HY
Telephone number	020 8669 6306
Fax number	020 8773 9789

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following aspects: achievement and standards, particularly how leadership, management and provision are leading to potentially exceptional progress in reading and writing; the reasons for slightly lower performance in mathematics; personal development and well-being, especially current attendance levels and the systems to monitor and promote good attendance; the curriculum and care, guidance and support.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work and documents. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Elphege's Roman Catholic Infants is slightly smaller than average. About a third of the pupils come from a White British background. The remainder come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds including Black African and White Traveller of Irish heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average and a few of these are at an early stage of learning English. St Elphege's RC Infants' federated with St Elphege's Junior School in September 2006. The schools share the same site, headteacher, senior leadership team and governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Elphege's Roman Catholic Infants' is an outstanding school. All groups of pupils achieve exceptionally well from often low starting points because of outstanding teaching and an exceptionally well-planned curriculum. Excellent care, guidance and support lead to outstanding personal development and well-being for pupils. As parents correctly commented, 'The standards of learning and behaviour are high' and 'Fantastic school, my child has made very good progress, and the teachers are outstanding'.

Outstanding leadership and management have contributed significantly to the school's success over the years. The headteacher, staff and governors successfully promote outstanding educational provision and this leads to outstanding outcomes for pupils. The experienced headteacher provides excellent leadership. She is extremely well supported by other talented senior staff. Teamwork among the staff is strong and all leaders make a valuable contribution to the school's effectiveness and improvements. Governors are committed, supportive and have a good understanding of the school's performance. This performance is reviewed systematically and findings are used very well to guide planning for improvement and to set challenging targets. Accurate self-evaluation and even higher standards than at the time of the last inspection demonstrate the school's outstanding capacity to improve.

High quality teaching enables pupils to make outstanding progress across the school. By the end of Year 2 standards are significantly above average and they are exceptionally high in writing. One parent summed up the views of many, 'I am very pleased with my child's progress. She reads beautifully and is learning to write very well'. Pupils also make exceptional progress on using and applying their numeracy skills. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who respond exceptionally well to their teachers' high expectations of learning and behaviour. Classrooms are attractive with high quality displays reflecting the variety of pupils' work. Teachers' clear instructions, demonstration and explanations promote learning very well. Pupils are given numerous opportunities to discuss their work and this develops their speaking and listening skills extremely well. Assessment is used effectively to match activities and tasks to pupils' abilities and needs. As a result, all pupils, including higher attainers, are challenged well and make exceptional gains in their learning. Pupils work hard, are productive, take care, and pride in their work. Teaching assistants are well developed, effectively deployed and make a valuable contribution to learning, particularly for pupils or at an early stage of learning English. The marking of pupils' works is effective because praise and encouragement is given for good work and constructive comments help pupils to improve.

A stimulating curriculum contributes exceptionally well to pupils' progress, enjoyment and to their personal development. The curriculum is particularly effective in meeting the wide range of pupils' needs. While there is a strong emphasis on language, reading, writing and mathematics; art and design, information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology (DT) are also strong elements. For example, pupils in Year 2 created striking pictures of fireworks using a computer 'paint' programme. The pupils' impressive art work is inspired by a wide range of famous artists. Themed activities such as 'creativity days', 'history week', and 'DT day' add meaning and relevance to pupils' learning. A good range of additional activities, such as visits and visitors, further enhance pupils' learning and enjoyment. The school has identified that pupils with early language and physical skills in Year 1 would benefit from the interesting language and practical type activities provided in Reception.

This school clearly has the confidence of its parents and has established a very strong partnership with them. The headteacher and staff have been particularly successful in providing guidance and practical workshops that help parents support their children's learning more effectively. As one parent commented, 'I have found school workshops very useful'. The parental survey revealed that parents hold very positive views about the school and are delighted with the care and education provided for their children. Parents commented, 'We are extremely pleased with St Elphege's RC Infant School'. Parents, volunteer helpers and external agencies all make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning particularly in reading.

Care, guidance and support make an exceptional contribution to pupils' academic and personal development. There are established systems to assess and track pupils' attainment and progress. Pupils are set clear individual learning targets in English and mathematics so that they know what they need to do to improve. Pupils are becoming increasingly more skilled in assessing their own progress. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. All pupils thrive in the school's very positive atmosphere. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected by their enthusiastic participation in all activities. Pupils are courteous, friendly and show considerable respect for others' beliefs and faiths. The school works very hard to monitor and promote good attendance and most pupils' attendance is good. As a result, the attendance rate is satisfactory and improving. However, a significant minority of parents take their children out of school for long periods and this deflates overall attendance levels. Behaviour is often exemplary because of the high expectations of all staff, stimulating teaching and the outstanding relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils' very positive attitudes and behaviour contributes significantly to their outstanding achievement. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles show an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating, exercising regularly and keeping safe. Pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education because, by the time they leave, they have acquired very competent literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Their personal and social skills are also exceptionally well developed.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

A significant number of children enter the Nursery with very limited language and social skills. Outstanding leadership, high quality teaching and a stimulating curriculum enable all children to make exceptionally good progress in all areas of learning in both the Nursery and Reception. Communication and language skills are skilfully promoted through all activities. Teachers and teaching assistants provide an effective blend of direct teaching and allowing children to explore, be creative and work independently. By the end of Reception, children have acquired expected levels of knowledge and skills, which prepare them extremely well for the next stage of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Incorporate more of the interesting language and practical Reception activities into the Year 1 for pupils at early stages of language and physical development to make the transition from Reception to Year 1 even smoother.

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Annex A

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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Elphege's RC Infants' School, Wallington, SM6 9HY

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school and showing me your work. I enjoyed my visit and would like to tell you what I have found. St Elphege's RC Infants' is an outstanding school where everyone is doing exceptionally well.

These are strengths of the school:

- In the Nursery and Reception you get off to a really good start.
- You all thoroughly enjoy school and take part in activities with enthusiasm.
- The school is a very friendly, caring and pleasant place to be.
- Behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school.
- Teaching is outstanding, which is why you make such exceptional progress.
- By the end of Year 2, standards are high, particularly in reading and writing.
- An outstanding range of learning activities are provided for you.
- You show an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe.
- The school is exceptionally well led and managed by your headteacher and other senior staff.
- You show considerable care and respect for other pupils and adults.
- Staff take excellent care of you and give you outstanding support.
- Your parents are extremely pleased with the care and education provided.

There is just one area that the school could work on to make it even better:

- The exciting language and practical activities in the Reception classes could be used more for some of you in Year 1.

Finally, thank you once again for all your help. I wish you all the very best for 2008.

With kind regards

Derek Watts

Lead Inspector