

St Pancras Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114568
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311648
Inspection date	18 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Sheila Browning

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geraldine Smith
Headteacher	Maria Cowler
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2003
School address	De Montfort Road Lewes BN7 1SR
Telephone number	01273 473017
Fax number	01273 486559

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how successfully the school is boosting pupils' achievement in English and improving pupils' progress, especially the more able; how effectively the quality of teaching and learning is being improved; and establishing strengths in the provision for pupils' personal development. Evidence was gathered from data, school documentation, lesson observations and discussions with staff, pupils and governors. 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 selfevaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school. It takes pupils from a fairly wide area and from a wide mix of social and economic backgrounds. Most children are from White British families, though increasingly other ethnic groups are represented. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and in some classes it is very high. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly at the level expected for their age, although it fluctuates year-on-year. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at different times during their primary education is higher than in most schools. In recognition of its work, the school has an Artsmark Gold Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the school is good. The pace of change has radically stepped up since the appointment of the headteacher two years ago. The issues raised in the previous inspection have largely been addressed, and some weaker aspects have been turned into strengths, such as pupils' achievement in science, and the curriculum. In partnership with the local authority and other external advisors the school is successfully tackling underachievement. Standards have risen significantly at the end of Year 6 in the past two years. Evidence confirms an improving picture across the school and pupils' achievement is good. The unvalidated Year 6 national test results in 2007 were above average, significantly so in science and mathematics. Recently standards in Key Stage 1 have also risen. Whilst much has been achieved, the school is aware that more work needs to be done to fully eradicate the remaining pockets of underachievement in Years 3 and 4 and to build on the improvements already being made in pupils' writing skills. Generally, more-able pupils are suitably challenged to reach their full potential but this is not done consistently well in all classes. Children have a good start in the Reception Year and consequently most exceed the levels expected for their age by Year 1. Sharper target setting and regular tracking of pupils' progress have provided teachers with more accurate information. This has lifted teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of and has raised achievement. Training, external support and coaching to improve teachers' skills have made positive differences to the quality of teaching, which is good. 'Brain awareness week' has heightened teachers' knowledge of the different ways that pupils learn. Teachers now use common rules and methods to teach writing skills, which has led to significant improvement in pupils' reading skills too. At the start of each lesson teachers share with pupils what they are expected to learn and encourage them to take a more active part in their own learning. For example, in a Year 4, 5 and 6 class, pupils prepared arguments for or against sending animals into space as part of their 'space learning journey'. Following a whole-class 'Kung Fu Rap' to reinforce writing rules, pupils immersed themselves in debate and acted in role as envoys, facilitators and scribes. This provided excellent speaking, listening and writing opportunities whilst making learning relevant and enjoyable. At lunchtime, pupils eagerly shared with the inspector that they knew all about 'vocabulary, connectives, openers and punctuation' and simply loved writing. Nonetheless, sampling of teachers' planning and pupils' work indicates that such exciting learning opportunities and methods are not used consistently in all classes. There is scope to improve pupils' punctuation, use of vocabulary and presentation of work, especially in Years 3 and 4, where there is a slight dip in pupils' progress. A good curriculum is improving the quality and impact of learning. Through 'learning journeys' effective links are made between subjects, enabling pupils to use the knowledge and skills gained in one area to aid their learning in another. This has made teaching and learning more exciting, relevant and motivating. Consequently, pupils are interested in learning and their behaviour is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language achieve well because their needs are identified early and they receive good additional support from skilled teaching assistants. There is a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development and learners are well prepared for their future lives. Effective contributions to the local community and links with the Church and with a Zambian nursery enable pupils to fully appreciate social and cultural diversity. Rightly proud of its achievements in science, the arts and sports, the school makes effective use of a number of specialist teachers. The building of a new science and arts block, 'The Ark', has enhanced the learning environment significantly and this has had a huge impact on pupils' attitudes and enjoyment. Pastoral care is high profile and effective and, as a result,

pupils have a strong sense of belonging and pride in their school. Safeguarding arrangements are secure. Parents are very positive about most aspects of the school's work. A few felt their concerns were not listened to and that communications could be improved, and the school has noted this. As one parent commented, 'The school succeeds in promoting a sense of pupils belonging to a 'family', which leads to a caring and supportive atmosphere.' Pupils confirm that they are generally given good advice about how to improve their work. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and are keen to take part in all the school offers, such as the international days and school productions, and they support one another very well. They clearly know how to lead safe and healthy lifestyles. Attendance is satisfactory and the school works closely with parents to improve it. During the past two years the school has experienced several difficult issues, including considerable pupil underachievement and staffing difficulties. These have all been successfully managed and reflect the shared determination for ongoing improvement. The headteacher's strong leadership is moving the school forward at a fast rate. The local authority is providing good support for the enlarged leadership team to ensure that all members develop a more rigorous focus on school improvement. Subject leaders have received effective training to enable them to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. The headteacher and staff work well as a team and their self-evaluation is accurate. Governors challenge the school effectively and have won an award in recognition of their innovative approaches. Given the improvements in significant areas, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Reception class. Significant improvements in the learning environment, especially the outdoor learning space and improved resources, are providing good opportunities for children to develop their independence. Good teaching and a well-balanced curriculum help children respond positively and this is seen in the standards they achieve. By the start of Year 1, most children exceed the nationally expected levels in most areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in writing, especially in Years 3 and 4.
- Share the good practice seen in teaching to ensure that it is consistently good throughout the school and that more-able pupils are always given suitably challenging work.

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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?	2
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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 the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

- 18 September 2007 Dear Pupils Inspection of St Pancras Catholic Primary School, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1SR Thank you all so much for the wonderful welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I particularly enjoyed talking with you and watching you learn. St Pancras is a good school. Here are some good things about your school.
- The children in Reception get off to a good start in their education.
- Most of you are making good progress and by the end of Year 6 you reach above-average standards.
- You are taught well and this helps you to make good progress.
- Your behaviour is good and you are working hard.
- You all really enjoy school and know how to lead safe and healthy lifestyles.
- Your teachers and all the adults in your school take good care of you.
- You told us how much the curriculum had improved and that now learning is more interesting and fun.
- When I spoke with you, you explained very carefully about how much progress you make and about the targets you have.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors are working hard together to improve your school further. Here are things I have asked the school to improve.
- To help you reach higher standards in writing, especially in Years 3 and 4.
- To make sure teaching is always at least good and to check that those of you who are more able are always given work that challenges you to do your very best. Sheila Browning Lead inspector

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Sheila Browning
Lead inspector