

St Pius X Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115192
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338530
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pauline Akhurst
Headteacher	Anthea Caddy
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed seven teachers and twenty lessons. They met with a member of the governing body, staff and pupils, looked at a range of school policies and plans, records of pupils' progress, questionnaires returned by pupils and staff and the 43 questionnaires submitted by parents and carers.

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

- boys' achievement in reading and writing at Key Stage 1
- how well the school supports the growing number of pupils from homes where English is not the first language
- pupils' understanding of how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve.

Information about the school

Most pupils who attend this average sized school come from the immediate locality although a small minority travel from further afield. The number of pupils on roll is rising. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, although the proportion from minority ethnic groups has grown steadily in recent years and is now broadly average. The proportion of pupils who come from homes where English is not the first language is also broadly average. Fewer pupils are entitled to free school meals than is typical in a school of this size. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. There are also more pupils with statements of special educational needs than is usually found in a school of this size. The school has gained a number of awards in recent years, including Activemark and National Healthy Schools Status.

Since the last inspection, the school has changed its admission arrangements. Now, all children start in Reception in the September of the academic year in which they reach their fifth birthday.

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

This is a satisfactory school that promotes pupils' personal development well. Pastoral care is strong. Staff are vigilant in ensuring pupils' safety and offering support and counselling to any pupils and their families in need. Good links with local health and social services mean that staff seek expert advice, especially to help pupils with significant medical problems or disabilities. Most pupils enjoy lessons, especially those where they are actively involved in their learning. Pupils are well behaved in class and around the school. They understand and respond well to the school's high expectations for their behaviour. Pupils feel safe and they have a clear understanding of what to do if bullying occurs, but they say this happens rarely.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Although many children start in Reception at levels that are below those typical for their age, they leave the school at the end of Year 6 with broadly average attainment. Progress is satisfactory in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1; it is more often good at Key Stage 2. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. At Key Stage 1, those with moderate learning difficulties in particular do not always make as much progress as they should. This is because they do not have consistent opportunities to be actively involved, talk about their learning and develop their understanding. Interventions, where pupils receive additional help outside classrooms, are not always successful in helping them to make enough progress towards their individual learning targets.

Teaching is satisfactory and occasionally good, especially in Key Stage 2. Teachers have positive relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well. Learning intentions are usually clear and pupils know what they have to do to succeed in lessons. They respond well to teachers' marking in their books. Although they have a broad idea of their targets, they are unclear about the levels of their current attainment and specifically what they have to do to improve and move to the next level.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage participate readily in the activities that are provided for them, work well together and develop good levels of independence. The activities led by adults are successful in promoting basic reading, writing and mathematical skills but the activities on offer, for children to choose for themselves, often lack interest and excitement. The use of the outdoor area is not planned well enough to support children's learning in all areas of their development.

The headteacher has implemented useful monitoring and evaluation processes to enable her to gain an accurate overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection. Pupils' achievement in writing has improved at Key Stage 2 and the consistent use of behaviour management

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strategies has been effective in reducing exclusions and minimising disruption to pupils' learning. Some elements of teaching have improved, especially at Key Stage 2. The school has already identified the weaknesses in provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities at Key Stage 1 but have not yet taken action to address them. Nonetheless, the headteacher's determination, coupled with good support from governors, mean that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that activities children choose for themselves are more stimulating, investigative and challenge them successfully in all areas of learning
 - using the outdoor area more effectively to promote learning in all aspects of children's development by the end of October 2010.
- Raise the achievement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities at Key Stage 1 by:
 - ensuring that lessons engage pupils actively in their learning, rather than listening to the teacher
 - directing additional support more effectively in lessons to help and encourage pupils by the end of October 2010.
- Improve pupils' progress and learning by:
 - ensuring that they have a clear idea of their attainment and exactly what they have to do to move to the next level
 - implementing interventions that more closely meet the needs of underachieving pupils by end of October 2010.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The vast majority of pupils are attentive in lessons. They work hard and try their best to meet the challenges that their teachers set. Girls and boys from all ethnic backgrounds, and those from homes where English is not the first language, achieve satisfactorily and generally enjoy learning. Work seen in classrooms and in their books shows that pupils are making satisfactory progress overall. However, their progress is more rapid in Key Stage 2 where lessons are often more practical and involve pupils more in investigation and research, especially in Years 5 and 6. In a Year 5 science lesson, for example, the pupils excitedly investigated how sound travelled by making simple 'telephones' from plastic cups and string. They eagerly shared their ideas about whether the string should be tight or slack and learned about how to make the test fair by choosing the same type of string for their experiments.

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Pupils' attainment in writing, an area identified at the last inspection, has improved at Key Stage 2 and is now broadly average. The attainment of Key Stage 1 pupils in reading and writing is below average, especially amongst boys, because lessons do not always engage their interest. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in Key Stage 2. Additional support for pupils in small groups is effective in helping them to build on their prior attainment. However, in Key Stage 1, their needs are not always met well enough through the teaching and interventions and this restricts their progress.

The school's work to gain Activemark and National Healthy Schools Status

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	3
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?

The curriculum is satisfactory in engaging most pupils in learning. Year 6 pupils enjoy the annual residential visit and effective partnerships with local secondary schools provide useful opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to develop their scientific and mathematical skills and knowledge. Partnerships with a range of local clubs help pupils to increase their sporting expertise.

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 some classes, pupils have good opportunities to develop their literacy, numeracy and computer skills in different subjects. Year 6 pupils, for example, devised Powerpoint presentations of their science investigations about planting seeds. They refined their vocabulary and added notes to the slides to support their presentations to the rest of the class. However, the school has identified the need to review the curriculum to make it more relevant to pupils' needs and interests.

Although teaching remains satisfactory overall, there are signs that it has improved since the last inspection. Pupils are usually clear about what they are meant to learn and teachers use a good range of strategies to maintain pupils' attention, for example, interactive whiteboards and brisk question and answer sessions. They explain new concepts well. In a Year 4 lesson in the computer suite, for example, the teacher quickly settled the class after playtime and demonstrated clearly how pupils could use hyperlinks to develop their presentations. They worked hard together, sharing one another's ideas to complete the task successfully. In a few lessons, pupils spend too much time listening to teachers, rather than doing things for themselves.

Effective systems are in place to promote good attendance and these have been successful in reducing persistent absence. Good levels of support are provided for pupils from homes where English is not the first language, especially those who join the school during Key Stage 2 and this helps them quickly develop their confidence and fluency. Transition arrangements are good. Meetings between the school and staff from the local nursery and secondary schools are effective in helping children settle in quickly and continue on their learning journey.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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?

The headteacher drives the school's work satisfactorily and shares her vision effectively with staff. She has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has prioritised improvements appropriately. The deputy and middle managers have adopted a useful monitoring cycle to give them a sound overview of provision and pupils' achievements but are not yet proactive enough in driving improvements forward. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. There is a strong sense of community within the school and locality but links with other United Kingdom and overseas communities are still developing. The governing body has completed a useful audit of provision, implemented an improvement plan and is monitoring progress

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effectively. This reflects governors' good involvement in the school and their secure knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. They provide strong support for the headteacher and monitor finances and school improvement well. They strive constantly to improve their own effectiveness, for example, recently reviewing their programme of school visits to ensure that information gained is shared more widely within the governing body.

There are clear procedures to ensure that pupils are safe in school. Safeguarding policies are good and reviewed regularly to ensure their full effectiveness. Staff are trained regularly in safeguarding and new staff checked carefully to ensure their suitability. Staff promote equality of opportunity satisfactorily, checking carefully to see whether pupils, whatever their background or needs, make enough progress. They have already identified the need to improve the effectiveness of their work with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in Key Stage 1.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
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

Good induction procedures ensure that children settle quickly and develop their self-confidence. Parents and carers appreciate the warm welcome given to their children, and adults' efforts to make them feel safe and happy. Children develop a satisfactory understanding of healthy living and enjoy the fruit provided for their mid-morning snack but, although there is a water fountain available in the corridor, children do not have ready access to water in the classroom.

Children's levels of attainment on entry to the Reception class vary considerably from

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year to year. Many children begin at levels that are below those typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress but the attainment of many is still below the levels expected nationally by the time they move into Year 1. Children communicate their ideas, begin to learn their letters and sounds and develop a basic understanding of numbers and shapes. They enjoy pretending to be shopkeepers and customers in the 'shoe shop', and keenly count out the coins in exchange for various pairs of shoes. Children's progress is assessed regularly, especially following adult-led activities in literacy and numeracy. However, there is limited assessment of their learning during the activities that children choose for themselves.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There have been some improvements to the premises and level of resources but these are not yet fully utilised to meet the full range of children's needs and interests.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Although only a small minority of parents and carers returned the questionnaire, those who responded were very positive about the school's work. They thought that the school was well led and managed and nearly all said that their children enjoyed school. A few expressed concerns about how the school dealt with unacceptable behaviour but inspectors found that there were clear procedures in place which were working well. A few were worried that their children were not making enough progress and inspectors have some sympathy with this view. They found that, sometimes, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in Key Stage 1 made insufficient progress. Inspectors did not agree that there were insufficient opportunities for parents and carers to contribute their suggestions and express their concerns, as regular questionnaires are issued to seek their views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Pius X 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 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 204 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	53	19	44	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	65	13	30	2	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	56	18	42	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	42	22	51	3	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	42	24	56	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	56	16	37	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	60	16	37	1	2	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)	22	51	16	37	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	37	23	53	2	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	58	13	30	3	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	58	15	35	3	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	65	14	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	53	18	42	2	5	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 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.



25 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Pius X Catholic Primary School, Chelmsford, CM1 4HY

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school recently and telling us your opinions about your school. Thank you also to those pupils who returned questionnaires. Your views, along with everything else that we saw, helped us form a clear view about how well your school works. You go to a satisfactory school and these are some of the important things we found out about it.

All the adults take good care of you and keep you safe in school.

You understand what it means to be healthy, and many of you enjoy the nutritious school lunches and bring healthy options in your packed lunches.

You support and respect each other well.

Your behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.

Most of you work hard in lessons and try to do your best.

Children in reception settle quickly and enjoy school but we have asked adults to make sure that all the activities, inside and outside, are planned well enough to help the children make faster progress.

Sometimes, in Key Stage 1, pupils who take a bit longer to learn do not receive the right sort of support and this restricts their progress: we have asked your headteacher and teachers to improve this.

The pupils who responded to the questionnaire said they would like more information about how well they are doing: we have asked your teachers to explain exactly what you have to do to reach the next level.

You can play your part in helping your school become even better by making sure you continue to work hard, behave well and attend school every day.

Yours sincerely

Mary Summers

Lead inspector

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