

St Augustine of Canterbury Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118779
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326891
Inspection dates	19 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI

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 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Lea
Headteacher	Katharine Sexton
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2006
School address	Deanwood Drive Rainham Gillingham Kent ME8 9NP
Telephone number	01634 371892
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors evaluated the school's overall effectiveness and investigated the extent to which pupils make good progress from their starting points, the strengths of the curriculum, and whether the school's impact of promoting community cohesion is sufficiently proven. Evidence was gathered from: published assessment data; scrutiny of documentation and parents' questionnaires; interviews with staff, pupils and a governor; and observations of the school at work. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's 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 Augustine of Canterbury is a small, yet expanding, Roman Catholic primary school situated next door to the church. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a mixed-age class of Reception and Year 1 pupils. There is a second mixed-age class for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Key Stage 2 pupils are taught in single-age year groups. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority heritages is below the national average, as is that of those who are eligible for free school meals. A larger than average proportion of pupils has an identified learning difficulty or disability, including those with a statement of special educational needs. Approximately 50 per cent of pupils on the special needs register have joined St Augustine from other schools. Although the vast majority of pupils stay at the school following admission to the Reception Year, approximately 30 per cent of pupils have joined the school at other times.

For the past 18 months, the school has provided an after-school care club for pupils to stay until 18.00 every day and a daily breakfast club from 08.00 to 08.45. This provision is managed by the governing body and was inspected as part of the main school's inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The staff and governors at St Augustine of Canterbury judge that they provide a good standard of education and care for their pupils. Their view is an accurate one and one that is shared by the vast majority of parents and carers who replied to Ofsted's pre-inspection questionnaire. The headteacher, her deputy and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader provide good determined leadership. In the face of considerable challenges since the last inspection in respect of a falling roll and associated reduced funding, they have not only taken tough decisions but have always maintained the right focus on raising pupils' attainment.

One of the challenges over the past year has been to reorganise the provision so that younger pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. Initially this was met with considerable opposition from parents and carers but the changes were managed well. As a result of appropriate modifications to the curriculum, careful monitoring of teaching and learning, and keeping everybody informed, the high standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 have been maintained, as has the confidence of parents and carers. A further associated challenge has been for the governing body to address deficits in the budget. Governance, judged to be satisfactory at the time of the last inspection, is now good. Governors are now more involved and better informed about the work of the school. Accordingly, they are able to play their part more effectively. They share the staff's focus on raising attainment and provide appropriate challenge, as well as support, to make things happen. Furthermore, they now have a balanced budget.

The school takes its role in the community very seriously. Not only does the Christian ethos feature strongly in its work but also good partnerships with families and local facilities. This is demonstrated by good attendance and feedback from parents and carers attending workshops and open days throughout the year. The pre-inspection Ofsted questionnaires show that a few parents and carers are concerned about too many changes in teacher for one of the classes last year, and do not always feel that the school takes their views or those of their children into account. But these concerns were not found to be widespread, with the vast majority of parents and carers providing positive comments about all areas of the school's work. Some families take advantage of the child-care facilities for their children, with around 12 pupils staying after school and twice as many coming for breakfast. The provision is good. Pupils are well supervised and can play and learn in a relaxed atmosphere. They can choose from a range of activities, including use of the school's computer suite and outside spaces. They can play together or by themselves if they wish. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are able to join these clubs and they mix well with the older pupils.

Pupils of all ages report that they enjoy school very much. They are particularly positive about the support that they get from staff and from their friends. They say that staff explain things well so that they can understand the work when it is difficult. Of their friendships, they say that everybody helps one another and they enjoy the times, such as buddy reading on Monday afternoons, when they work with younger or older pupils. These positive personal attributes contribute significantly to the friendly community spirit in school, as well as to a good climate for learning. Pupils

are confident. They talk a lot! In the best possible way, they discuss their work with friends, engage in lively debate and express their thoughts and opinions very clearly. Good quality provision for teaching and the curriculum facilitate these attributes. The many strengths of the curriculum include the flexibility to provide opportunities for pupils with differing interests, abilities and talents to shine. Their personal experiences are valued and taken into consideration when teachers plan the curriculum. Pupils' prior knowledge and understanding are used as a springboard from which to further develop their skills. Information and communication technology is taught discretely and other subjects provide good opportunities to apply the good skills that pupils develop as they progress through the school. However, there is no systematic plan for this, or assessment of pupils' skills in this area. Similarly, pupils of all ages clearly develop good skills in their speaking and listening but these are not assessed, tracked or evaluated against the curriculum on offer or in teachers' plans. Current developments aim to address this, together with a more systematic approach to plotting the progression of key personal and academic skills throughout the curriculum. There is a good range of extended curriculum opportunities, through trips and activities after school, such as the young enterprise club for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6. The clubs are very popular with the pupils, with over 80 per cent participating.

Pupils say that lessons are fun. Teaching is of good quality, characterised by lessons that are well planned to provide the right level of work to the right group of pupils. There is a high degree of consistency in teaching approaches such as the use of learning objectives and success criteria. These features, together with good opportunities to discuss and improve the quality of their own and one another's work, ensure that pupils are actively involved in their learning. At the last inspection, teaching assistants were not well deployed throughout lessons but this is no longer the case.

As a result of this good provision, pupils attain standards that are above national averages by the end of each key stage. This represents good progress from their starting points. Relative weaknesses lie in the quality of pupils' writing across the school, which does not keep pace with the accelerated learning in other subjects. This is particularly evident for boys and for those who are more able. Through accurate self-evaluation, senior leaders and governors are well aware of the things that need to improve. This includes extending their approach to promoting cohesion within wider community dimensions. The school's capacity to improve further is good, proven by a sustained period of development since the last inspection, as a result of a clear strategic focus on raising attainment.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children are given a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They come to school with skills that are in line with expectations for their age and make good progress in all areas of learning. By the time they begin Year 1, most reach the expected levels for their age and a significant number exceed them.

Good links are established with families before children start school and they are kept well informed of their children's progress and how to support them at home through contact books, curriculum workshops and parents' evenings. Good teaching

and interesting multi-sensory activities focus on building up each child's self-confidence and skills. Opportunities for speaking and listening are good, such as using talk partners to discuss mathematical questions. Good curriculum planning ensures that every child receives an enjoyable and challenging experience across all areas of learning. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities, and the outdoor learning environment gives children the opportunity to actively build upon whole-class teaching. For example, children were learning about the language of direction by using the bikes outside on a grid.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Detailed assessment of children's abilities in all areas of learning is reflected in exemplary planning, which is based on a thorough knowledge of individual children's strengths and weaknesses. The school is rightly focusing on closing the gender gap between girls' and boys' achievement in writing. To address this, some strategies are already in place including more topics of special interest to boys, and guided writing groups.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the quality of pupils' writing across the school, especially for boys and for those who are most able
- develop assessment and tracking of key personal and academic skills alongside improvements to the curriculum.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	2
The attendance of learners	2
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

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.

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 interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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



20 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Augustine of Canterbury Roman Catholic Primary School, ME8 9NP

You may remember that I came with another inspector to inspect your school just before half-term. We had a great day and it was a pleasure to be in your school. We tried to talk to as many of you as we could, either in class, in groups, at clubs or generally around the school. We have considered what you told us, together with the comments from your families and things that we saw ourselves. Now it is time to tell you about the judgements that we made.

We believe that your school provides you with a good standard of education and care. Mrs Sexton and the other leaders and governors are good at their job. They make sure that you make good progress and reach high standards. The staff know you very well. You told us that you like school very much, that lessons are fun and that you get the help that you need from staff and your friends.

In the same way that your teachers give you pink comments to help you think about how to make improvements in your work, we have given the staff some things to think about. To help you achieve even greater things, we have asked them to think about how to help you improve the quality of your writing, especially for boys and for those who are most able. This is because you don't make as much progress in your writing as in other subjects. We have also asked staff to look at the way that they plan and track your personal and learning skills.

I hope that some of you will read my report with your families. So, many thanks again for your help and for making us so welcome. We wish you well in all that you hope for yourselves in the future.

Yours truly

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector