

St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School, Bracknell

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110033
Local Authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	310182
Inspection date	15 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Armitage

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 on roll	
School	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Parkinson
Headteacher	Mrs F M Valentine
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2004
School address	Pembroke Hanworth Bracknell RG12 7RD
Telephone number	01344 424030
Fax number	01344 304041

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspection focused on the following areas:

- pupils' academic achievements in Key Stage 2
- the quality of pupils' personal development
- the quality of leadership and management.

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 the self-evaluation, were unjustified. These have been included in this report.

Description of the school

The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the percentage of pupils whose first language is not English is well below average. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Difficulties include dyslexia, language and communication impairment, hearing impairment and autism. There is a higher than average turnover of pupils who join and leave the school during Key Stages 1 and 2.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St. Margaret Clitherow is a good school. This is a view which is shared by pupils, parents and the wider community. The view expressed by one parent in the pre-inspection questionnaire is typical of many others: 'We cannot express our delight at the improvement in our child's academic work as well as his behaviour.... The school's management as well as their well trained, friendly staff are to be thanked for that'. Inspection judgements agree with this view. The school enables all pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good academic progress and outstanding progress in their personal development.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with abilities that are below those expected for their age. They progress well so that by the time they start Key Stage 1, standards meet national expectations. Their good progress continues so that when they start Key Stage 2, standards are above average. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 remain above average but progress, while remaining good overall, slows for some pupils. Various factors are responsible for this including the high turnover of pupils, the achievement of some average ability pupils in mathematics and the achievement of a few more able boys in writing. The school identified these issues and introduced successful new teaching and learning initiatives to address them. These include the 'Read/Write', 'Film in Literacy' and science booster schemes. The quality of pupils' work emerging from these schemes is impressive.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. The majority of pupils are confident, reflective and sensitive. Even at a very young age they are able to understand their feelings and the feelings of others. A good example is the Year 6 leavers' assembly when they read their own poems on the themes of moving on, fears and hopes. Pupils' moral and social development is very strong. For instance, they are extremely critical of bullying and have a strong belief in the need for rules to ensure that everything runs smoothly. As a result, behaviour is excellent and unauthorised absence is low. Socially, pupils generally get on well together and look after each other. A good example of this is the successful 'Playground Pals' scheme which pupils really appreciate. Pupils also play an important role in the community. There is substantial fund raising for charities, an eco-group focusing on improving awareness of environmental issues, choir singing in different venues, and an important role for pupils in church when they act as servers, read lessons and make collections. Cultural development is strong. A very good example is pupils' positive response to the twice-yearly book weeks, the most recent one on Africa reflecting the school's cultural diversity and good racial harmony. Many pupils play musical instruments and art is everywhere, usually of very high quality - in one instance leading to an award at national level in the Gypsy/Roma Poster Competition.

The quality of teaching and learning is good and often better than this. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They are keen to learn and respond very well to opportunities to take more responsibility for their own work. The school is rightly pleased with what has been achieved so far but acknowledges that this is an approach to learning requiring further development. Lessons are thoroughly planned, well resourced and clearly delivered. The school has effective tracking systems enabling work to be matched to pupils' needs. Teaching assistants work sensitively in supporting pupils and are very well deployed.

The quality of the curriculum is good. It is flexible and responsive to the needs of pupils. There is good focus on literacy and numeracy and innovation in developing links between subjects

so that pupils gain a more coherent picture and better understanding. Both information and communication technology (ICT) and literacy are successfully integrated across the curriculum.

Pupils are very well supported and there is much that is outstanding. Academically, they know how well they are doing and how to do better. Targets are set jointly by pupils and teachers and are regularly reviewed. Keeping healthy is very well promoted by the School Council and by the Healthy School Committee and a link has been established with a local supermarket. The result is that pupils are very aware of healthy food and the need for regular exercise. Pupils are aware of how to stay safe in part because of the highly effective personal, social, and health education programme. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education and there are very good transition arrangements with secondary schools. The school has just appointed a Family Liaison Officer to improve links with parents. There are excellent links with outside agencies, for example, those supporting travellers.

The quality of leadership and management is good with an outstanding capacity to improve. The headteacher is pivotal to the success of the school. She has clear objectives, keen to explore how to improve opportunities for pupils but cautious not harm what is already going well. She gets on well with pupils, staff and parents. She consults well but equally, is ready to make decisions and stand by them. She is well supported by her senior managers. Together with all staff, they share the headteacher's vision for the school. The quality of administrative, catering and maintenance staff is high creating a very pleasant environment. Governors have recently evaluated their organisation and have made useful changes which have improved their efficiency in decision making. They give very valuable support and have good relations with staff and children. They are often in school and have a good understanding of what goes on in classrooms. However, because of time and other constraints, they are not always able to understand fully data on school performance and how the school presents itself in its self-evaluation documentation.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get a good start to their education. They make substantial progress so that by the end of Reception, most meet the expected learning goals. Good examples of progress are the way in which the children are increasingly successful at linking sounds to letters and making words. Another example is their increasing fluency in number recognition. Children are able to play collaboratively, concentrate and express opinions. The teaching is good. There is an appropriate balance between activities led by the teacher and children acting independently. A lot is done through topics organised jointly with Key Stage 1 to ensure an easy transition for pupils when they leave Reception. Topics are often built around trips, for example, to a local country park linked to the study of minibeasts. The progress of children is carefully monitored and teaching modified as a result. The outdoor play area is pleasant. A big bonus is the help given by parents and grandparents with reading and other activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2, especially in relation to the achievement of average ability pupils in mathematics and more able boys in writing.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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?	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	1
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?	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?	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?	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	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School, Bracknell, Bracknell, RG12 7RD

As you know, I recently spent a day with you in your school. I talked to many of you and visited your classes. I also spoke with your teachers and met the headteacher and some of your governors.

You have a good school and I was very impressed by everything I saw. You do well and learn lots of new things. You are keen to learn and are well behaved. Your teachers work hard and want you to do well. They make lessons interesting and challenge you to think hard. Very often you have lots of fun. I was impressed by your kindness and thought for one another - for instance, how you look after pupils who do not have anyone to play with. I was also impressed by your understanding of quite difficult things in your poems and paintings. But perhaps the best example I can give of this is the way your representatives in the School Council decided what your school's first aim should be - 'We are a friendly, caring community, growing more like Christ as we learn and achieve those goals'. These words are very special and I am very pleased that you thought of them.

Although you do well, your headteacher is always eager for you to do better. She thinks that some of you in Key Stage 2 could improve your mathematics and writing and I agree with her. You will have to work hard if you are to do this and I know that your teachers will help. This is something I would like you to think about, perhaps in your School Council?

My very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Armitage

Lead Inspector