

St George's Cathedral Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100828
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	354901
Inspection dates	5–6 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Linda McGill

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	342
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alex Scott
Headteacher	Ann Higgs
Date of previous school inspection	25 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The team observed each of the class teachers teaching one lesson, making 12 in all. In addition, inspectors made a number of informal visits to classrooms and small-group rooms to observe the support for individuals and groups of pupils and partnership work with other organisations. Meetings were held with members of staff, groups of pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents and policies, including those related to safeguarding and the school improvement plan. The responses to questionnaires completed by pupils, staff and 70 parents and carers were analysed.

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

- How well teachers use assessment information to ensure that all groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress.
- How effective the school's efforts to raise attendance are.
- What impact the governing body has on the school's work and strategic direction.
- What the impact has been of recent initiatives to improve provision and outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This primary school is larger than average. Situated in inner London, it serves a population that is culturally and ethnically diverse. Most of the pupils are of the Catholic faith but their backgrounds reflect local diversity; the largest groups are of South American, Black British and Black African backgrounds and an increasing proportion are from European countries. Many speak English as an additional language; some are fluent in English but others, especially younger pupils, are at an early stage of learning the language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national figure. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good and rapidly improving school. Attainment has risen swiftly and is above average. Unvalidated test results for 2010 showed that the proportion of 11-year-olds reaching or exceeding the levels expected for their age was greater than that found nationally. Performance was especially strong in mathematics. Older pupils make faster progress than younger ones. Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory but improving as a result of better systems for assessment and planning. By the end of Year 2, pupils' progress is good. This is built on well in Key Stage 2 where, for the past two years, pupils have made excellent progress. Taken overall, achievement is good.

A number of factors account for these good results. The leadership team has determinedly tackled the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and aspects that were relatively weak have become strengths. The staff gather a wealth of pertinent information about the progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from different ethnic groups. This information is interrogated robustly and swift steps are taken to provide well-focused support where it is needed, to good effect. Every effort is made to meet pupils' learning needs and the type of support offered is tailored to the individual. This results in all groups of pupils making good progress. Similarly, good support is given to those who need help to overcome particular difficulties they may have in their lives. There is a clear expectation that everyone will succeed and the pupils are living up to it.

There are many strengths to the teaching. In particular, the teachers' lesson plans show a good understanding of what the pupils know already, what they need to do to move on, and how work is to be fine-tuned and support provided so that all can make good progress. Teaching assistants work well with individuals and groups. Teachers' questions probe pupils' understanding but also challenge them to think and encourage them to speak at length.

The pupils also make a good contribution to their own learning. They are enthusiastic in lessons and apply themselves well to what they are asked to do. They work readily together, are considerate of others' ideas and opinions, and respect and value highly the rich range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds represented in the school. Behaviour is good and, at times, such as in assemblies, it is impeccable. Pupils have a keen sense of justice and fairness. The school's ethos is warm, supportive and inclusive and the sense of community within the school is particularly powerful. Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The spiritual dimension of the curriculum is especially strong and pupils are thoughtful, reflective individuals. Pupils relish the opportunities they have to contribute to school life but have fewer chances to contribute in the wider community

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The school's leaders are ambitious and are striving for further improvement. They have an accurate understanding of what needs to be done to continue to move forward. Their track record so far confirms a good capacity to do so. The governing body takes a keen interest in the school's work but its involvement in strategic decision-making and its arrangements for seeking the views of parents are underdeveloped.

Turnover in leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has meant that improvements in provision and outcomes in this part of the school have not come as swiftly as elsewhere. Recently implemented systems for assessment and planning, together with highly motivated leadership, provide a good platform for improvement in this important key stage.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure children get off to the best possible start in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - embedding systems for assessing children's progress and development and using the information to adapt the day-to-day curriculum to match the next steps in their learning
 - enabling children in the Reception classes to learn and play outdoors as much as possible
 - ensuring that resources and the learning environment are of high quality.
- Increase the role of the governing body in school improvement by:
 - ensuring that its members are constructively critical of the school's performance and are involved in strategic decisions about the ways forward
 - taking steps to seek and act on parents' views, especially those who may be harder to reach.
- Enable pupils to play a stronger part in contributing to the community in the local area and beyond.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The levels of attainment seen in lessons and pupils' books show that standards reached in the most recent national test and assessment results have been sustained. Pupils' attainment at the start of Year 1 is broadly average. Attainment at the end of Year 2 recovered after a dip last year and the proportion of pupils reaching a secure Level 2 (the level expected at the age of seven) was in line with the national figure in reading and above it in writing and mathematics. Standards in Year 6 reflect a strong upward trend. In 2010, almost one third of the pupils attained a level that was higher than expected in both English and mathematics.

In all year groups, pupils are keen to learn. In lessons, pupils enthusiastically answered questions, sharing their thoughts and ideas readily. In a religious education lesson, pupils gave thoughtful responses when talking about how it feels to join a group, and how to make newcomers feel welcome. In a physical education lesson, pupils enjoyed team-building activities and laughed at one another's efforts to pass a hula hoop along a chain of pupils while holding hands. In a few lessons, pupils' learning was restricted because the

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pace was too swift or because the tasks were not well matched to their levels of understanding. For example, younger pupils were unable to calculate how many points they had scored in a game because the task was too challenging for them.

Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and thoroughly enjoy vigorous activity. They feel safe at school, saying that bullying is very rare and that teachers and other adults will sort things out if they have a problem. Members of the 'pupil leadership team' spoke proudly about special events such as Eco Week and Enterprise Day, and the work they do as 'language buddies' and play leaders. Attendance rates are average and rising. Pupils' above-average attainment and ability to work well in groups and teams mean that they are well prepared for the next steps in their school lives and the wider world.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

There is a brisk pace in most lessons which means that pupils' attention is captured and held. Teachers make sure that pupils understand what they are to achieve by the end of the lesson, and pupils do not waste time in getting started. Occasionally, however, things progress too quickly during question and answer sessions and teachers do not spend enough time making sure that everyone has fully grasped an idea before moving on. The most effective lessons are planned in detail and the deployment of support staff is given careful consideration. Teachers take every opportunity to encourage the pupils to speak

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and express their ideas, and this effectively supports those learning English as an additional language. There is a good degree of consistency in the way books are marked. Teachers routinely pose questions in their marking, and the pupils are given time to respond. Attractive displays of pupils' work in classrooms and around the school are annotated in English and in other community languages.

The school has recently adopted its curriculum with the use of a commercially-produced scheme as a way of making interesting and meaningful links between subjects. Early indications are that this is working well; pupils and staff report that learning is more enjoyable. A suitable range of visits and visitors also help to enliven learning. There is a strong emphasis in the curriculum on support for pupils' social and emotional development, and the introduction of 'philosophy for children' is an exciting innovation. There is a good range of clubs and activities and a high take-up from pupils.

In keeping with its inclusive ethos, the school provides good care, guidance and support for pupils and their families when it is needed. Partnership work with health professionals and social services is well coordinated and effective. Care is taken to ensure children have a settled start to school life and good liaison with secondary schools ensures a smooth transition at the age of eleven.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher form a strong team. Their skills complement one another well. Middle leaders have a clear understanding of what they need to do and staff at all levels are working towards shared goals. There is a systematic programme of monitoring and evaluation and teachers are accountable for the progress of every pupil in their class. This rigorous process ensures everyone understands their responsibility to ensure the best outcomes for the pupils. Making sure that pupils who are learning English as an additional language or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do as well as others is seen as the responsibility of the class teacher, as well as those who provide additional support. Challenging targets for pupils' performance have been exceeded for the past two years.

The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. It fulfils its statutory responsibilities and has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It ensures that safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective. Its role in driving improvement is not strong enough, however. The school has good relationships with parents and increasingly supports them through activities such as practical English classes and family learning, but does not systematically seek and respond to their views. The

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strong partnership working that is a feature of the school's care for its pupils also has a positive impact in other areas. Work with organisations such as local and international banks, businesses and schools contributes to pupils' learning in English, art and physical education, for example. The school's concerted efforts have resulted in the closing of any attainment gaps between different groups of pupils. This is testament to the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. Staff have a secure knowledge of the school's context and the issues that pupils and their families face in their lives. The school community is cohesive and mutually supportive. However, plans to extend pupils' involvement in the wider national and international communities are not yet well developed, although action is being planned to remedy this.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children who had recently joined the Nursery class had settled in well and were happily playing and exploring their surroundings. Some jumped gleefully in and out of puddles. Reception children, too, were confident in their classrooms. The adults have good relationships with the children and keep them safe. They establish clear routines so that children know what to expect. Appropriate emphasis is given to fostering their social and speaking skills, because their development in these areas is generally lower than expected nationally for their age. Children in one Reception class, for example, took turns in singing karaoke-style while others danced along to the tune. Interesting activities, such as examining a real fish, crab and octopus, stimulated children's curiosity and encouraged them to learn new words as adults helped them describe what they could see and feel. Children have plenty of scope to choose activities for themselves as well as joining in with those that are led by an adult. The Nursery and Reception classes plan together. Systems for planning and for assessing children's progress and development have been improved but not firmly embedded.

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The Early Years Foundation Stage leader is new in post but is very enthusiastic, is taking every opportunity to learn and is developing a strong network of support.

The Nursery and Reception classrooms are small and somewhat dark and shabby. Some of the resources are rather old or uninviting. The adults have worked hard to provide a wide range of opportunities covering all of the areas of learning, but this results in the classrooms feeling cramped. There is no direct access to outdoors from the Reception classrooms. The children sometimes share the Nursery outdoor area, but generally the chances for them to pursue their learning out of doors are restricted.

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

The parents and carers who returned their questionnaires were almost all happy with their child's experience of school. They were unanimous in feeling that their child is kept safe, and a very high proportion agreed that unacceptable behaviour is dealt with effectively. A small proportion disagreed that they are helped to support their child at home, that concerns are responded to and that children are well prepared for their future. Inspectors found that pupils' above average attainment stands them in good stead for the future, but also found that the school does not always do enough to seek and act upon parents' and carers' views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St George's Cathedral 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 70 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 342 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	67	21	30	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	61	27	39	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	42	60	22	31	4	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	59	23	33	2	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	36	51	30	43	3	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	59	22	31	6	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	56	29	41	1	1	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)	28	40	29	41	6	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	44	32	46	4	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	50	30	43	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	43	28	40	4	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	34	49	29	41	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	59	25	36	3	4	1	1

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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.



7 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St George's Cathedral Catholic Primary School, London SE1 7JB

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me and the other inspectors when we visited your school recently. It was a great pleasure to talk to some of you and to see you at work and play. We thought carefully about what you told us and what you put in the questionnaires, and looked to see how well you were learning in lessons.

This is what our report will say.

- St George's is a good school and we could see why you are proud of it.
- You make good progress and reach good standards in your work. Well done!
- Your teachers and other adults know you well and know how best to teach you and help you.
- You get on very well with one another and you are thoughtful, kind children.
- Your headteacher, other leaders and the staff have worked very hard to make changes over the past three years, because they are determined to do the best for you. We could see that they want to keep on improving.

We also want to help your school get even better, so we have asked the school's leaders to concentrate on three important things.

- The children in Nursery and Reception need to get off to a faster start in their learning, so that they can reach even higher standards when they get older.
- The governing body needs to do some work to strengthen its part in helping things improve, and to ask your parents and carers for their opinions.
- We would like you to be more involved in the wider community ♦ I think that your work as an 'Eco School' might give you some ideas about where to start.

With very best wishes for your future lives.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill

Her Majesty's Inspector

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