

St Scholastica Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100274
Local Authority	Hackney
Inspection number	354828
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2011
Reporting inspector	David Gosling

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	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Guiliana Molinari-Monks
Headteacher	Naomi Mulholland
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 16 lessons and observed eight teachers. Meetings were held with a member of the governing body, staff and pupils. Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including samples of pupils' work, pupils' records and assessments, and school policies and plans. Questionnaires from nine staff, 111 pupils in Years 3 to 6, and 65 parents and carers were also reviewed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Pupils' learning and progress throughout the school, especially in writing.
- Teaching and the curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The use of assessments to plan activities in lessons which meet the needs of all pupils.
- The quality of evaluation and planning at different levels of leadership.
- The drive to improve attendance.

Information about the school

St. Scholastica's is a smaller than average primary school situated just outside the centre of Hackney. The school has a very high proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with about two thirds from homes where English is spoken as an additional language. Comprising over a half of the school roll, the largest minority ethnic group is Black African. Pupils from Black Caribbean background, White British and White Traveller of Irish heritage form the next largest ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special educational needs is similar to the national average. Most of these pupils have either learning, emotional and behavioural, or communication difficulties. The school has received a number of awards including, Healthy Schools Status, the Silver Artsmark and the Bronze Sustainable Level Accreditation. The current headteacher was appointed in July 2010.

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 school, characterised by meticulous organisation and a rigorous drive for excellence by the headteacher and senior leaders. Parents and carers are right to be extremely happy with the education their children receive. With some major strengths, the school has good capacity to improve. Since the last inspection, there have been considerable improvements in the key areas of pupils' attainment and progress, teaching and learning, and leadership. The headteacher and leadership team have an excellent grasp of weaknesses and very well-focused plans have been put in place to address them. Middle leaders do not have the same clarity in their evaluations as at whole-school level but they have been energetically driving through improvements to teaching and the curriculum, especially in English and mathematics. The governing body is supportive but it is not active enough in challenging weaknesses and in helping set the direction of the school.

Learning and progress throughout the school are good. Comparatively slow progress in writing in recent years is being addressed effectively and, while progress is now good, this remains the weakest area in attainment for the current Year 6. Overall attainment is average for this age group, although attainment at the higher levels, as at the end of Key Stage 1, is below average. Attainment is adversely affected by attendance, which is only average. The school is working very hard to improve attendance but stubbornly high levels of absence from a small group of pupils are making improvements difficult. The attitudes of pupils to their learning and their behaviour are major strengths. Pupils feel very safe in the school and the school's provision for their safeguarding and welfare is outstanding.

The Early Years Foundation Stage makes a key contribution to learning and behaviour by providing a strong foundation for independent learning and self-discipline. Pupils have a very sophisticated understanding of health issues and eat healthily at school. They are very active in supporting the school and the local community, with a pupil Green Council to improve the environment, as well as a School Council. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This was exemplified in the St Patrick's Day assembly on the first day of inspection where prayers were taken very seriously by pupils. A number of them gave excellent presentations on St Patrick and some performed Irish dancing while their peers watched with enthusiasm and applauded. ♦

Teaching is good and some in Key Stages 1 and 2 is exceptional. Lessons are full of vitality and it is not surprising that all parents and carers in inspection questionnaires said their children enjoy school. ♦ There is a very small proportion of satisfactory teaching held back by some weaknesses in planning and the clarity of explanations, but the team of teachers and teaching assistants is very skilful and sometimes inspirational. The use of the

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information from assessment to provide work that is targeted on pupils' abilities, especially the more able, is not yet precise enough. ♦

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning so that it is consistently at least good by ensuring:
 - all teachers make more use of pupils' assessments to target work on groups of pupils, especially the most able
 - all teachers' planning and explanations in lessons contribute to high quality learning.
- Improve attendance, with a particular focus on any group of pupils whose attendance is less than average.
- Ensure the governing body is more active in:
 - holding the school to account for weaknesses and how well plans are carried out
 - helping to shape the direction of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Attainment is average, with strengths in reading and mathematics, but some weaknesses in writing. Fewer pupils attain above expectations (Level 5) than is found nationally. There has been considerable improvement in attainment in recent years and the rate of learning and progress from below average starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Although pupils still show some weaknesses in spelling and sentence structure, books from all year groups show fast progress in writing over the past year. Pupils write well in a range of types such as stories, letters and descriptions. As a result of exceptional teaching, the pace of improvement in Year 2, in particular, is excellent, with some excellent extended work recently produced on Little Red Riding Hood stories.

All parents and carers in the inspection questionnaires thought their children enjoyed school, and this is reflected in the very high level of pupils' enthusiasm and engagement in lessons. ♦ Pupils work extremely hard, even when the work is difficult, and this has led to large amounts of work being produced in lessons. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of well-targeted support from teachers and skilful teaching by teaching assistants. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress as a result of careful planning and a wide range of support from visual resources. In some lessons, the most-able pupils do not make enough progress because they are not sufficiently challenged. ♦

Behaviour is exemplary around the school and at least good in all lessons. Pupils are extremely polite and cooperative, and respect each other's contributions in lessons. There is very little bullying and pupils say that when it occurs it is dealt with promptly. There has been a decline in attendance in recent years. This is partly due to the erratic attendance by a small number of pupils. Good progress in basic skills and in developing the ability to work both independently and in teams is leading to good preparation for secondary schools and the workplace. All parents and carers in inspection questionnaires thought that the school helped their children to lead healthy lifestyles and they have an excellent

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understanding of health issues. Pupils take on a wide range of responsibilities in school and undertake a considerable amount of fund-raising for charities such as one for endangered animals. Pupils have a very influential voice through the School Council. ♦

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	3
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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?

Pupils, and parents and carers, rightly have a high regard for teaching. Teaching is good overall at each key stage and is exceptional in Year 2 and some Year 6 lessons. ♦♦ Some aspects of teaching are excellent. Marking is extremely thorough and is making next steps very clear, the questioning of pupils is challenging and well-targeted, pupils carefully mark and edit their own work, and excellent use is made of visual aids such as pictures and videos. ♦ A particular strength is the inspirational quality of many lessons. A wide range of exciting activities is set in lessons and teachers are inspiring pupils with their interesting contributions and the way they consistently make work relevant to pupils' interests and lives. A good example of inspiring teaching was a Year 3 mathematics lesson where pupils very effectively learnt about fractions by joining and separating paper cups. Lessons are very carefully prepared, with well-organised resources. Teaching assistants are targeted well in plans and they teach sensitively and effectively. Pupils have a clear understanding of their targets and teachers refer to them well in lessons and marking. Although teachers set different work for different groups in all lessons, sometimes this work is not matched

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enough to the pupils' ability levels, especially for the most able and gifted and talented pupils.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, with an appropriately strong focus on English and mathematics. Statutory requirements are met and there has been some innovation with the recent introduction of the International Primary Curriculum (IPC). The two IPC lessons observed during the inspection showed that its emphasis on active learning and combining subjects was engaging the pupils' interest very well. Some aspects of the IPC, especially mapping out progress in the knowledge and skills of different subjects, are not fully developed.

The very high quality of care, guidance and support provided is reflected in the extremely positive views of support from parents and carers and pupils. ♦ A great strength is the range of support provided for the most vulnerable pupils. This includes the use of a mental health officer, therapists and a school counsellor. Although it has not been successful with all groups, the school has tried very hard to improve attendance.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

School leadership has been effective in raising attainment since the last inspection and in improving the quality of teaching. An intensive focus on improving writing throughout the school this year has been very effective. An exceptionally well-led drive to improve marking and pupil self-assessment has also made a key contribution to improvements in writing, as well as a range of other subjects.

The headteacher has very high expectations. With the governing body, she has set ambitious targets for pupil attainment and attendance, as well as a target for all teaching to be good or better by the end of this school year. A comprehensive pupil tracking system provides a clear overview of the attainment and rates of progress in each class. Any weaknesses are followed up rigorously with teachers and a range of robust interventions, including one-to-one tuition, are in place for potential underachievers. There is a strong focus on raising attainment in the excellent, detailed school improvement plan. Senior leaders have a very accurate grasp of the quality of teaching and learning through regular observations of lessons and reviews of pupils' work, and vigorously follow up any weaknesses. The staff inspection questionnaires indicate that the morale in the school is high. Although whole-school evaluation is very detailed and thorough, at subject leader level there is not enough clarity about the specific strengths and weaknesses in attainment and teaching. ♦

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The governing body has an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses and attends a range of training. The headteacher has pointed out in governing body minutes that it is not providing enough challenge and, although the governing body is consulted on plans and vision, it is not active enough in shaping the school's direction. The governing body and staff ensure that safeguarding procedures are extremely effective. Very rigorous vetting procedures and risk assessments are in place and all parents and carers in inspection questionnaires think their children are kept safe. The school communicates well with parents and carers and they are involved fully in their children's learning, for example through workshops and parenting classes. Parents and carers have made a satisfactory contribution to whole-school developments.

The progress and attendance of different groups are monitored carefully. Statutory policies for equal opportunities are in place and these are also monitored, but the evaluation of their impact is not so well developed. There are virtually no incidents of racist behaviour recorded and different ethnic groups mix very harmoniously. A wide range of planned activities helps develop community cohesion and pupils are gaining a good global perspective of different communities from the International Primary Curriculum. While bridges with local ethnic, religious and social groups are not yet as strong, the school has well-advanced plans to address 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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

There has been considerable improvement in children's progress, teaching and learning, and leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage since the last inspection. Children enter the Nursery with below the expected levels of skills and knowledge and make good progress so that by the end of Reception they achieve standards that are expected for their ages. The weakest areas in attainment are in writing and mathematics, although

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children make equally good progress in these areas. The good balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities results in children becoming confident and independent learners. One example of this was the observation from a child when observing worms: 'They don't have teeth because they don't bite.' Children enjoy school and respond very positively to the adults' high expectations of behaviour.

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a vibrant, warm and welcoming environment. Planning is clear and detailed and meets the needs of different groups, as indicated through the thoughtful ongoing assessments of children's work. Staff work very hard and skilfully to ensure that resources and the learning environment are well organised and stimulate interest. The outdoor provision, though improving, is not yet providing an extensive range of learning opportunities. All adults, including Nursery Officers, have good knowledge of Early Years Foundation Stage learning and make a good contribution to the children's safety and welfare. The curriculum provides a good balance of activities which engage the children's interest. The provision for information and communication technology, although developing, is still limited.

Leadership is very ambitious and shows an energetic drive for improvement, including in the expertise of staff. The Early Years Foundation Stage has been completely overhauled since the last inspection, with a number of initiatives relatively recent. ♦ Good links are established with parents and carers. They are very happy with the school and rightly think their children are kept safe. The assessment system is good but does not make sufficiently clear the next steps children need to take to improve.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

All parents and carers are happy with the school and inspectors think that they are right to hold the school in such high regard. Questionnaires show high levels of satisfaction with all areas. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed some concern in questionnaires about the account taken of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors found communication with parents and carers to be good during this inspection but judge that more could be done to involve them in whole-school decisions.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St. Scholastica's Roman 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 inspector received 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 240 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	74	17	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	48	74	17	26	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	44	68	21	32	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	55	29	45	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	58	27	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	58	27	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	46	35	54	0	0	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)	24	37	35	54	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	38	37	57	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	55	29	45	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	42	34	52	4	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	30	46	34	52	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	65	23	35	0	0	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 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



19 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Scholastica's Roman Catholic Primary School, Hackney E5 8BS

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. We are especially grateful to those of you who took time to talk to us about your work and tell us what you think about the school. We thought you were very polite. There are lots of good things about your school, as you wrote in your questionnaires, and here are some that really stood out:

- You are making good progress with your work as a result of good teaching.
- You feel safe in the school and teachers look after you, taking great care to ensure you stay safe. ♦
- You have an excellent understanding of how to be healthy.
- You enjoy school and, even though a few of you thought behaviour was not always good in your questionnaires, we think your behaviour is excellent.
- You respect each other and take your prayers seriously.
- You play a big part in helping the school run smoothly and you do a lot to help people in the local and wider area.

There are three things the school could do even better:

- In some lessons, teachers need to plan work more fully so it builds on what you can already do.
- A few of you need to come to the school more often.
- The governing body could check how well the school is doing more frequently and do more to help write plans to help the school improve.

All of you can help the school even further by continuing to work hard and doing your best. ♦♦♦

Yours sincerely

David Gosling
Lead inspector

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