

St Agnes Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	100949
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	376491
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2012
Lead inspector	John Anthony

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Enda Austin
Headteacher	Brid McDaid
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2008
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	14–15 June 2012
Inspection number	376460



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Introduction

Inspection team

John Anthony

Additional inspector

Val Ives

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team observed 17 lessons taught by 10 teachers. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at strategic and curriculum planning, records of pupils' progress, other school documentation and monitoring records of teaching and learning. Inspectors met informally with parents and carers, and analysed 74 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as 16 from staff and 53 from pupils.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized inner city primary school serving a culturally diverse community. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is more than double the national average. Two thirds of all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with the largest groups from Black African mixed heritages, Black Caribbean and White British heritages. Almost one third of pupils speak English as an additional language, nearly double the national average, and this is increasing year on year. The proportion of pupils on school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than average, with the majority having speaking, language and communication difficulties. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school runs a breakfast club between 8am and 9am daily. It is a member of the Get Set Olympic network and has gained Quality Mark and Artsmark awards, and holds Healthy Schools status.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- St Agnes is an outstanding school. This is also the view of most parents and carers, accurately summed up in the words of one: 'The school is run by lovely people who care about their pupils and their needs.'
- Achievement is outstanding because pupils are taught by skilled staff. As a result, they make excellent progress throughout the school to reach well above nationally expected standards by the end of Key Stage 2. Combined with the promotion of their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development that is deeply ingrained in all aspects of the school's life, the school prepares pupils exceptionally well for entry into secondary education.
- Pupils are extremely proud of their school and their achievements. Many commented that 'teaching is really good', 'it's really fun' and that they 'want to get better and better'. Teachers provide exceptionally clear guidance in well-planned and highly structured lessons. Because marking and regular assessments are detailed and thorough, pupils are very clear about their targets and how to improve their learning. Pupils make rapid progress in all year groups. Very occasionally, lessons lose pace, but the vast majority of evidence from lessons and samples of pupils' work show that teaching and learning are typically outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are exceptionally attentive during lessons, and, as a result, are able to carry out tasks very quickly. Their relationships with staff and each other are extremely positive and productive. Pupils are also provided with a very secure environment in which their welfare and safety are seen to be paramount. As a result, pupils thoroughly enjoy school.
- Leaders and managers, ably supported by the governing body, have developed an excellent learning, and deeply spiritual, environment, and have consistently improved teaching and learning through highly effective performance management. The school provides an exciting, imaginative and innovative

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curriculum, leading to immense enrichment of pupils' academic and personal development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the rigorous programme of teachers' professional development to:
 - share the very best practice already evident in the school
 - ensure that a brisk pace of learning is routinely delivered in all lessons.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Most parents and carers agree, with the words of one representing many of the views expressed in saying how she was 'very happy with my child's education'. From starting points that are often well below those expected for their age, children make excellent progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They quickly grow in confidence, developing important language, numeracy and other skills and exceed the expected goals for learning by the end of Reception. As a result, they are well prepared for the more formalised learning approaches in Years 1 and 2. They continue the momentum of excellent progress, so that at the end of Key Stage 1, their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is well above national expectations. They become highly competent readers at an early stage because of well-focused and skilled guidance, and are well prepared to continue accelerating their learning in Year 3. No group of pupils are disadvantaged in achieving their potential, because teaching is directed at providing individual pupils, regardless of their backgrounds, with the help and guidance they need. This was demonstrated in a guided reading session, where a group of pupils with language difficulties demonstrated fluent and confident reading that was far in excess of what would usually be expected. The focus on phonics (the linking of letters and the sounds they make) and accurate pronunciation quickly develops pupils' reading skills. Several parents expressed concerns about their children's progress in Year 4. However, staffing issues earlier in the year have been resolved successfully, and pupils are now rapidly making up for lost ground. Overall, pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make excellent progress in their learning throughout the school because outstanding teaching and the vibrant curriculum instil an enthusiasm for learning and a desire to achieve as well as they can.

The importance of good writing is emphasised throughout the curriculum. For example, in a Year 5 science lesson, pupils were required to write clear and lucid sentences to explain the various methods of dispersing seeds to aid plant reproduction. By the time pupils have reached the end of Year 6, this strong focus on developing reading and writing skills leads to well above average attainment in both reading and writing. In addition to excellent teaching, pupils learn well in

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mathematics because problem solving and calculation activities are often based on events with which the pupils are familiar. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils used the Olympic theme to manage a budget for supplying the resources needed in creating an Olympic village. Pupils were able to look beyond the routine and use their imagination to identify many of the background services needed to keep such an event running smoothly.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is outstanding. Nearly all parents and carers consider that their children are taught well, typically summed up in the comment: 'We are very proud of St Agnes school. Well done, teachers!'

On entering the Nursery, children are quickly taught the basic skills needed to develop as independent and confident learners. Well-organised planning ensures a good balance between activities led by adults and those initiated by children. As a result of excellent teaching in Reception, children develop finely honed communication, reading, writing and language skills which prepare them well for transition to Year 1.

The quality of teaching and pupils' learning throughout the school is boosted by finely tuned support from a highly effective team of classroom assistants. Parents, carers and inspectors agree that teachers and teaching assistants work very well together. An example of this was seen in an outstanding Year 1 phonics lesson where a highly skilled teaching assistant was fully involved in helping pupils how to describe a character and think about his feelings. Pupils that are disabled or have special educational needs are very well taught and supported and make the same rapid progress as their peers.

Teachers have excellent relationships with their pupils, enthusing them and encouraging them to participate. The progressive development of teachers' skills enhances their expertise and subject knowledge to ensure that pupils learn extremely effectively in different ways and have the chance to think and learn independently. Lessons are well planned so that pupils' wide-ranging needs are catered for. Teachers use time well, although occasionally unnecessary repetition slows the pace of learning, which sometimes leads to a loss of focus. Overall, pupils are challenged to think laterally, as seen in Year 5 lesson where teaching was outstanding and integrated the Olympics theme with mathematics. Pupils used a range of skills to cross-reference, measure and compare different physical activities, such as jumping, running and bouncing a ball.

Pupils say their learning is 'fantastic' because teachers help them if they are 'stuck'. Pupils know what their targets are; they assess their own work and also set their own targets. Marking and the guidance given to pupils in their books are consistently of a high quality. Pupils say 'we go back and look at all the comments we've got' and respond to them. The promotion of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is threaded through all aspects of teaching, an excellent example of

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which was described by pupils who said they had learned 'to be happy with who you are'.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are attentive and cooperative in lessons, work very well with each other, and use their own initiative to move their own learning on when they have completed set tasks. They are determined to do well, demonstrating the ability to persevere to complete tasks properly, and show resilience in overcoming obstacles.

Behaviour is typically exemplary, as was reflected in lessons and during breaks. The school's inclusive policy seeks to avoid using exclusion as a remedy for lapses in the high standards of behaviour expected, and it is applied only in the most extreme circumstances. The focus is on working with the family and the pupil to encourage improvement. Pupils are courteous, calm and relaxed, and their personal relationships are friendly. In lessons, pupils are considerate, as shown by one pupil, for example, who moved a chair to one side to help one of the inspectors move past. A deeply reflective and spiritual atmosphere is evident during assemblies, which also promote pupils' social, moral and cultural development extremely well.

Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying, whether based on disability, race or differing lifestyle choices, through sessions on bullying. Pupils explained that 'there's no bullying in the school because it has ended, and if there was any, it would be dealt with'. The overwhelming majority of pupils say that they are happy to come to school and that they feel safe. Almost all parents and carers who completed the questionnaire agreed that their children are safe at school. Attendance is improving, and is currently above average as a result of a determined effort to raise its profile across the school.

Leadership and management

Leadership in the school is calm, measured and collaborative. Leaders constantly strive to incorporate the best possible practices, work extremely efficiently as a team, and have a highly effective process of evaluating what needs to be done to improve. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is promoted extremely well in all aspects of school life, and the staff lead by example. Leaders and managers are very well supported by the governing body, which is fully engaged in the life of the school. The professional development of teachers is closely linked to their performance management and based on driving up standards still further. The drive for improvement can be seen in the award of a Quality Mark and in the high achievement of pupils in all respects, including their excellent personal development into mature and reflective individuals. These factors combine to demonstrate clear evidence of the school's strong capacity to continue to improve.

The curriculum is innovative and responsive to current events. For example, the school has joined the Get Set Olympic network, inspiring pupils through basing lessons and activities on the Olympic theme. The school's excellent promotion of the

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arts and its focus on developing the whole child have been recognised in the awards of Healthy Schools and Artsmark, the results of which can be seen in the vibrant displays of pupils' work all around the school. A wide range of clubs and a wealth of exciting opportunities for pupils of all ages through music, art, textile design, sport, drama, and the study of nature at first hand in the 'Forest school', enhance pupils' experiences considerably. The school also efficiently runs a breakfast club from 8am to 9am daily. The curriculum is greatly enriched through a wide and varied range of educational visits, and the school has excellent partnerships with support agencies. A strong commitment to equality and supporting the needs of all pupils ensures that there is no discrimination. Safeguarding is stringently enforced throughout the school and meets statutory requirements.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



18 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Agnes Catholic Primary School, London E3 3ER

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school. On behalf of the team, I should like to thank you for completing the questionnaires, and especially thank those of you who met with us to tell us all about the many exciting things that you do, and how proud you are of your school. We judge that you go to an outstanding school. These are some of the things that stand out about your school.

- Your teachers and all the staff who look after you make sure that you have the very best education possible. You tell us that they make learning fun and that you are very happy at the school. You work hard and, as a result, are making really good progress in your lessons. This means that by the time you leave, you do much better than pupils in many other schools.
- You tell us that you feel very safe in the school and that you and your friends always behave very well. We agree that your behaviour is impressive. You also tell us that there is no bullying in the school. This means that you are free to enjoy school and do your very best. You greatly enjoy the many opportunities for taking part in musical events, drama, art, school trips, and in the many sporting activities.
- All those who lead and manage your school work hard to give you the best possible education and look after you extremely well.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and members of the governing body to ensure that all your teachers continue to teach you as well as the best teachers are doing so now. You can play your part by continuing to work as hard as you currently do.

With best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Anthony
Lead inspector

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