



Office for Standards
in Education

Inspection Report

ST AGNES CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Unique Reference Number: 105500
LEA: Manchester

Inspection Dates: 08 – 10 June 2004
Reporting Inspector: HMI John Gornall

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was
deemed section 12 (3) under the same act

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INTRODUCTION

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the staff of St Agnes' C of E primary school and Manchester local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1	Very good
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Adequate
Grade 4	Not adequate

Description of the school

St Agnes' is an average-sized Church of England primary school for children aged from 3 to 11 years. It serves an area of dense terraced housing in the south of Manchester. Almost all of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds with strong Islamic traditions. The attainment of the pupils when they first enter school is well below average. Most speak English as an additional language (EAL) and when they first start school their experience and understanding of it is very limited. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average, but the school has good grounds for believing that this figure underplays the disadvantage faced by the local community. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is in line with the national average and four pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

St Agnes' is a good school with considerable strengths and is, rightly, highly regarded by its pupils and the community. The school's view is that its overall effectiveness is good and inspectors agree. The pupils enjoy school and, though many start with a limited understanding of English, they achieve standards that match the national averages and they leave well prepared for secondary education. However, their progress through the school is uneven; it is better at Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1, and this reflects the relative quality of the provision. The leadership and the management of the school are good. The headteacher has taken well-judged, sometimes bold, decisions about what direction the school should take and there is an honest appreciation of what needs to be improved. The staff work hard to support the many EAL pupils and the leadership is clear sighted and determined. The school is characterised by high expectations, tolerance, trust and pride in doing well. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

Grade: 2

Improvement since the last inspection

The school was last inspected in June 1999. Since then it has effectively addressed most of the issues for improvement. The school, in its self-evaluation, points to improvements in standards as a result of better teaching and improved attendance. Inspectors agree with the school. Data confirms standards have risen; the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected standards when they leave the school has almost doubled from approximately 45 % to nearer 80 %. The results in English and mathematics are now better than those of similar schools.

Grade: 2

Capacity to improve

The school's capacity to improve is good, because the governors and leadership team are not complacent and set high expectations. In each of the past three years, the school has received nationally recognised awards for its achievements in raising standards which is a testament to its ongoing emphasis on improvement. The school's self-evaluation paints a very clear and accurate picture of where the schools' strengths lie and where there are areas for further improvement. The strong profile of good and very good teaching and learning at Key Stage 2 highlights the potential for further improvement in the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1.

Grade 2

What the school should do to improve further

The school's self-evaluation recognises most of the areas where improvement is needed. To continue the trend of improvement the school should:

- raise standards by accelerating the pupils' progress in the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1

- bring coherence to the systems for tracking pupils' progress
- further develop the role of middle managers so they contribute more effectively to monitoring the performance of the school and raising standards
- continue to seek ways to provide accommodation that is more fitting for education in the 21st Century.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

The school believes that pupils make good progress overall and inspectors agree. The pupils' work and performance were examined in lessons, in their books and in national tests. Since the last Ofsted report there has been an upward trend in the pupils' results in national tests at both key stages. Overall, the pupils make adequate progress in the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1, though they do better in Year 2. Their progress throughout Key Stage 2 is very good. Consequently, by the time they leave, the majority achieves standards that are above average in mathematics and broadly average in English and science. The Year 6 pupils say they have enjoyed their time in school and they have been helped to achieve well.

Grade: 2

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Attendance has improved significantly over the last two years, and for the last two terms has been similar to the national figure for primary schools. This marked improvement reflects the emphasis that is given to good attendance in weekly assemblies and also the enjoyment the pupils derive from coming to school.

The pupils are very well behaved in lessons and around the school. Relationships are exemplary and for several years there has been no need to exclude pupils from school for any reason. The pupils treat adults and each other with respect and they have a strong sense of right and wrong. They readily accept the many opportunities to exercise responsibility; for example pupils rotate in being the class 'VIP' or a group leader.

The pupils are very enthusiastic learners; by Year 6 they acquire good work habits. They listen attentively, settle immediately to work, give thoughtful answers and organise their materials with care. Many of the pupils are meticulous in how they present their work. They take great pride in gaining awards at the weekly assembly for achievement; this is reflective of their very positive view of school and what it offers them as learners.

The school makes very good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development and good provision for their cultural development. Through a mutual desire to achieve the best for the pupils, the school works in close harmony with its mainly Muslim community. Different faiths are studied as part of religious education, lessons allow pupils to reflect, and pupils experience natural phenomena, such as the recent transit of Venus. Visits are made to local places of interest, and theatre groups perform in school. There is a limited range of after-school activities since many of the pupils attend the local mosque at this time, but the pupils enjoy the sports on offer and have experienced some success in competitions.

Grade: 1

QUALITY OF PROVISION

The teaching is good overall, but there is some variation across the school. In the lessons seen in Key Stage 2 it was consistently good and often very good; in Key Stage 1 it was satisfactory and sometimes good; and there was some unsatisfactory, as well as satisfactory, teaching in the Foundation Stage. Most of these lessons were well planned, prepared and organised. The better lessons were characterised by high expectations, a drive to achieve well-chosen but straightforward objectives, and clarity of explanation so the pupils knew exactly what they had to do. The unsatisfactory teaching stemmed from activities that lacked sufficient purpose. The school's 'partnership teaching', whereby two teachers take joint responsibility for a year group, works very well. Despite the difficulties of the accommodation staff enrich the pupils' learning environment by providing displays of high quality.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, and takes due account of national guidance. It gives appropriate emphasis to basic skills and successfully caters for the need of almost all pupils to learn English as a second language. The school is rightly working to improve provision in the nursery where a broad range of tasks is carefully set out for pupils, but some lack precision over what the pupils are to learn.

The teachers know their pupils well and they use their assessments of standards to help them to pitch work at levels that are generally well judged in relation to the pupils' needs. The school has much information from Year 2 onwards, on the pupils' levels of attainment. However, there is some lack of coherence to the different records and predictions that are held. Analyses of this information are not presented in such a way that they highlight the individual pupils who are, or who are not, progressing well.

The school pays particular regard to the pupils' safety, health and general well-being. All the adults give these aspects of education a high priority. This is recognised in the local community's considerable regard for the school reflected in the waiting lists for pupils' admission. Through involvement in Manchester's Healthy School Partnership programme, the staff encourage the pupils and their families to take positive steps to promote healthy lifestyles. The pupils speak very positively about the work done in the school to assure their welfare, for example in the lack of bullying, and they are confident to turn to the teachers and lunchtime supervisors if they need help.

Grade 2

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The previous Ofsted inspection described the leadership and management of the school as good. The senior management team has not changed and continues to be good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and has set a clear direction for the work of the school and, over time, has established a shared vision of how this is to be achieved. He has developed an excellent working partnership with his deputy, staff and governors, who have a sense of collective responsibility for and understanding of the school's priorities. The strong leadership has been important in setting a very positive climate to enable pupils to enjoy school, respect each other and achieve well. The role of middle managers has improved but their oversight of the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is underdeveloped. Their monitoring, evaluation and intervention with regard to pupils' progress is not sharp enough.

The school is effective in providing very good equality of opportunity for all its pupils. In discussions with inspectors the pupils commented very positively about how teaching and other staff encourage them to join in activities in order to build their confidence in language

acquisition. The resources available in school are adequate and used well by staff. The school meets its statutory requirements and this represents an improvement on the previous inspection.

The school's accommodation is inadequate. The three-storey building erected in 1883 and its small grounds have many shortcomings. Some of the classrooms are cramped making storage and accessibility of resources difficult. The pupils have no access to a sports field and the small hard play area used at break and lunchtimes restricts their movement.

Grade 2

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