



Inspection report

St Mary's CE Infant School

Unique Reference Number 102139
LEA Haringey

Inspection number 273491
Inspection dates 19 and 20 January 2005
Reporting inspector Ms L McGill HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Type of School	Infant and nursery	School address	Church Lane
School category	Voluntary Aided		Hornsey
	<i>Diocese of London</i>		London
Age range of pupils	3 to 7 years		N8 7BU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8348 7805
Number on roll	233	Fax number	020 8341 7284
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Miss C Goymer
Date of previous inspection	October 2003	Headteacher	Mrs A Cumbers

Age group	Published	Reference no.
3 to 7 years	23 February 2005	273491

Introduction

When St Mary's CE Infant School was inspected in October 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on three occasions to monitor its progress, and re-inspected the school in January 2005.

Description of the school

St Mary's CE Infant School is situated in Hornsey, an urban area in north London. Most of the pupils live in the immediate locality and come from a broad range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, and the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is close to that found nationally. Over one third of the pupils speak a language other than English at home. There are 233 pupils on roll, including 61 who attend the nursery class on a full or part-time basis. Parents who choose to send their children to the nursery for the full day pay for the hours in addition to the part-time place. Thirty of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, including six who have a formal Statement of Special Educational Need. On entry to the school, the pupils' attainment varies widely, but is average, overall.

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Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

Following the school's inspection in October 2003, the headteacher and staff, with the support of the governors, worked determinedly to ensure that the necessary changes were brought about as quickly as possible. The school now provides a sound education for its pupils. The proportion of Year 2 pupils who attained the expected Level 2 in English, mathematics and science last year was broadly comparable to schools nationally and was greater than that of schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Improvements in planning and teaching have brought a good degree of consistency between classes and have ensured that most of the pupils make progress at the expected rate. The youngest pupils are given a good start in the nursery class. The pupils' attitudes are good and their behaviour is very good, and they respond with interest and enthusiasm to effective teaching. The curriculum is suitably broad, but not all subjects are given sufficient time. The school is soundly led and managed and the headteacher, staff and governors have a strong vision for the future.

Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of October 2003 required the school to address areas for improvement concerned with the pupils' achievement in English, mathematics, science and other subjects where the pupils were underachieving; the quality of teaching; the breadth of the curriculum; and the checking of teaching and the curriculum. There has been good improvement in improving teaching and the checking of teaching and the curriculum, and reasonable progress in the other areas. There is scope to further improve the pupils' attainment in information and communication technology (ICT), and to make sure that the pupils who have the potential to attain highly are sufficiently challenged in lessons.

Capacity to improve

The school is well placed to build on the improvements already made. The headteacher has shown determination in tackling areas of weakness, and there is greater rigour and consistency in the school's approaches to evaluating its performance and identifying the next steps. A sense of urgency and a desire to do the best for the pupils, shared by senior staff and governors, has characterised the school's way of thinking since its inspection. Co-ordinators have developed and extended their work effectively; they have a secure grasp of standards of attainment and the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning in their subjects, and have drawn up clear plans for future developments. The local education authority (LEA) and the diocesan board have supported the school well and have kept a close eye on its progress. The governing body has improved the part it plays in supporting the school and in keeping its progress under review. All parties share a determination that the school should continue to build on what it has achieved.

What the school should do to improve further

The school recognises the areas where improvement is needed. However the key priorities are to:

- continue to improve the quality of teaching;
- improve standards in ICT;
- ensure that the higher attaining pupils are challenged sufficiently in lessons.

Achievement and standards

The children in the nursery and reception classes make a good start: they are on track to reach, and in parts exceed, the nationally set early learning goals in each of the areas of learning by the end of the Foundation Stage. At Key Stage 1, most pupils achieve what is expected for their ages in English and mathematics, but too few exceed this level. Last year's Year 2 pupils achieved standards in line with the national average in reading and writing and below average standards in mathematics, but their performance compared more favourably with those of pupils in schools in similar circumstances. The teachers' assessments of the current Year 2 pupils shows that they are on track to do better than last year's cohort and reverse the overall downward trend in standards over the last five years, which reflects recent improvements in the teaching.

Many of the pupils in all classes make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in lessons, including those who have special education needs and those whose home language is not English. Too often, however, the more able pupils do not achieve high enough standards because not enough is demanded of them. The pupils achieve national expectations in aspects of other subjects, such as design and technology and art, but standards in ICT are low, even though the school has begun making improvements to the provision.

Personal development

The pupils' behaviour in class and around the site is very good: none have been excluded from school. The pupils have very good relationships with adults and with each other, and respond well to the teachers' clear guidance on how they should behave. Pupils of all ages played well together, obeyed the school's rules and respected each other's feelings.

From the nursery to Year 2, most pupils are enthusiastic learners and are keen to try out new ideas, especially when the teaching excites them. They worked productively on individual tasks and group work when unsupervised, although a few occasionally needed prompting because they were easily distracted and quickly lost concentration. Many confidently asked questions of each other, or clearly expressed and explained their ideas, and others did so willingly when supported, including those who have special educational needs. The pupils have begun developing problem-solving skills but they are not as

advanced as they need to be. Suitable procedures for checking absence and promoting high attendance have led to a rise in attendance this school year to over 94 per cent, which is closer to the national figure than last year.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because the related provision pervades the daily life of the school. The nursery settles pupils in quickly and effectively promotes good social skills. The pupils value praise and willingly fulfil responsibilities as 'special helpers'. Assemblies engaged pupils in thinking about moral, social and cultural issues and provided opportunities for reflection and prayer. The pupils participate in cultural events such as Black History Month; they visit theatres, a mosque and church and meet visitors. Displays celebrate the language and flags of a broad range of countries, including those of the pupils' families, and illustrate the pupils' work on famous heroines, such as Florence Nightingale, and famous events, such as the Great Fire of London.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching was satisfactory overall; it was at least satisfactory in all the lessons and was good in about half. The teachers work well together in their year-group pairs and their joint approach to planning and teaching has led to a greater consistency of experience for the pupils. Improvements in teaching, and a better match of the tasks and activities to the pupils' levels of attainment, have enabled most of the pupils to make steady progress in their learning.

The teaching was most effective when the teachers' approaches were lively and they were enthusiastic about the subject they were teaching. This engendered a positive response in the pupils. The lessons were well planned and organised; the pupils were told what they were going to learn about and resources were well chosen and suitable. Explanations were clear and the tasks built well on the pupils' existing knowledge. Questions were generally used well to probe the pupils' understanding and to help them explain their thinking. In a few lessons, however, the pace was too leisurely, and on occasions the higher attaining pupils were not sufficiently challenged.

The teaching assistants and nursery nurses made effective contributions to the pupils' learning, leading group work, supporting individuals during whole-class sessions and making observations and assessments of the pupils' responses. Their work had a positive impact on the progress of lower attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs.

The school has established sound systems for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress. Subject co-ordinators and class teachers know the pupils' levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science. The information from assessments is used increasingly to help with future planning and to set targets for every pupil, and overall targets have been set for year groups in forthcoming national tests. Analysis of the information has helped the school identify aspects of work for further attention; for example, the need to begin joined-up handwriting as soon as possible.

The curriculum is suitably broad, encompassing the National Curriculum, with particular emphasis given to English and to developing the pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. However, the time allocated for the study of some subjects falls short of that recommended nationally. Frequent visits and visitors to the school enrich the curriculum and broaden the pupils' experiences.

The teachers and support staff have the pupils' well-being at heart. The school has a supportive, warm atmosphere in which the pupils feel safe and cared for.

Leadership and management

The school is soundly led and managed. The headteacher's leadership is firm and committed. Since the inspection in October 2003, the headteacher and senior staff have worked hard to bring greater rigour to their work in keeping the school's performance under review and have set up good systems and procedures. A cycle of self-evaluation and improvement is firmly in place, and recognised as central to the school's continued development. There is a strong team spirit among the staff members. The headteacher, staff and governors have a strong vision for the future and an accurate and common understanding of the important areas the school will need to tackle next.

Subject co-ordinators have improved the part they play in leading their subjects. They have a good overview of standards and the pupils' progress, and their observations of lessons and scrutiny of the teachers' plans and the pupils' work have given them a clear picture of what should be done next. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator has provided good support to two recently appointed teachers in the reception year.

The governing body fulfils its responsibilities and has played an increasingly effective part in monitoring the school's progress, and its members have grown in their understanding of their role as critical friends.

The good support provided by the LEA and the diocesan adviser has been effective in helping the school to improve teaching, develop and strengthen leadership at all levels and establish sound systems for monitoring and evaluating the success of initiatives. In addition, the regular inspections to check on progress have provided the school with valuable feedback.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

St Mary's CE Infant School was inspected by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in October 2003 under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in March, June and November 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of October 2003.

In January 2005, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Fifteen parts of lessons and two assemblies were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior staff, a group of governors and representatives from the LEA and the diocese. Informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and areas for improvement in the inspection report of October 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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