

St Joan of Arc RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100449
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	276314
Inspection dates	26–27 June 2006
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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 on roll	
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Karen Simms Miss Clare Campbell
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Northolme Road Highbury Park London N5 2UX
Telephone number	02072263920
Fax number	02077049220

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This two-form entry school is larger than average and serves a wide area comprising three Roman Catholic parishes. It is situated near Arsenal Football Club. Two thirds of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, the largest being Black African. Just over a third of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average. Five pupils have a statement of special educational need. The school provides support to other schools in information and communication technology (ICT), especially in the use of interactive whiteboards. It has Healthy Schools status.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade:

What the school should do to improve further

* Ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities consistently achieve as well as other pupils and monitor the effectiveness of the support they receive.

* Improve the pace of teaching where it is weaker and ensure that resources are consistently well used to enhance learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade:

Personal development and well-being

Grade:

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade:

Teaching is good, and as a result pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress. Relationships between staff and pupils are good, as is the behaviour of pupils and their attitudes to learning. There are some examples of outstanding practice. In these lessons, subject knowledge is excellent and activities are delivered enthusiastically and at a challenging pace. For example, reception class children loved sharing stories with adults in small groups while their friends worked happily independently. The teacher was with a group but aware of everything that was going on and subtly intervened when necessary to ensure children got the most out of their experiences. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to enliven lessons. Pupils are clearly able to demonstrate their understanding through discussion, group work and their independent learning. Learning is made fun, and expectations are high. In some lessons the pace of teaching is too slow, and teachers have not thought through how to use resources or deploy support staff to best effect.

Teachers assess pupils' progress well and show them how to improve. There is regular monitoring and evaluation of lessons by senior staff with helpful points for development. The quality of teaching for pupils with learning difficulties varies, and their learning is inconsistent. Teaching is well adapted for the few pupils at an early stage of learning English, and they learn as well as their classmates.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade:

The school has a good and balanced curriculum that covers all subjects well. The creative arts are a particular strength, alongside good provision for the learning of key skills, including ICT. The school has placed an emphasis on personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), which contributes well to pupils' positive attitudes. School assemblies are vibrant and enriching experiences. In some classes the needs of pupils with learning difficulties are not fully taken into account, so that the work is too difficult for them. Teachers are finding ways to make the curriculum more innovative, and are supported by an active committee of governors. This makes

learning more interesting and relevant and is helping to raise standards. One pupil said, 'Lessons are great, my teacher is great, and you get to learn all sorts of interesting things'. The school lacks an adequate library, with easy access for all pupils to enjoy reading and to learn independently. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of other activities. The choir reaches exceptionally high standards because of the expertise of its leaders. In recent years the school has started to compete in sports with other schools. A residential visit for Year 6 pupils is very popular and develops their social skills well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade:

The school looks after its pupils well. Pupils are safe and secure because child protection, first aid and health and safety procedures are effective. The pastoral support of pupils is particularly strong exemplifying the school's Catholic ethos. Most pupils achieve well and reach high standards because teachers keep a close eye on their academic performance. Teachers are quick to notice if a pupil is not doing as well as they should and to find activities which are better matched to their need. The support given to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is of uneven quality, but is satisfactory overall. Teachers are more aware of the need to set them clear improvement targets, which are reviewed regularly. However, some teachers are still not sufficiently knowledgeable in providing the right match of work and activities for these pupils. Pupils have a shared understanding of the school rules. A focus on improving provision at lunchtimes has led to calmer sessions. Pupils with behavioural problems are learning to cope better through regular sessions out of class with a special teaching assistant.

Leadership and management

Grade:

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Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Pupils

We enjoyed spending time with you. Thank you for making us so welcome. We think your school is good and getting better all the time. Your singing is absolutely wonderful. You clearly enjoy your lessons and you all work hard. We are pleased that you make good progress, and we think the teaching is good.

We were struck by how polite everybody was, and the calm atmosphere in the school, even when it was a wet day on Monday. We know that the dining hall can be noisy, but we think lunchtimes are improving. We would like more of you to eat up your vegetables! We think that your school is led well and that your headteacher has brought in some good changes since she took over. All the staff work together well to help you with your learning.

We think that those of you who find learning more difficult need more support to help you do your best, especially when you are in the classroom. There is some excellent teaching in your school, and we would like to see more of it. We think all the teachers need to keep you on your toes the whole time, so that there is never time for you to be bored. We think the library should be put in a better place, as it is hard to get to at the moment. Perhaps you could discuss with your teachers where would be a sensible place for it to go. Thank you once again for making our visit so enjoyable. We have many happy memories of your school, especially of your assembly when the school community came together in a beautiful act of worship.

Yours sincerely

Mr N Butt

Lead Inspector