



St Monica's Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 100268
Local Authority Hackney
Inspection number 285757
Inspection dates 14–15 September 2006
Reporting inspector Glynis Bradley-Peat

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hoxton Square
School category	Voluntary aided		London
Age range of pupils	3–11		N1 6NT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 7739 5824
Number on roll (school)	206	Fax number	020 7613 4465
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mena Rego
		Headteacher	Carmel Connors
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	14–15 September 2006	285757

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is slightly smaller than average with a falling roll and serves an area of high deprivation. The majority of pupils come from Black African backgrounds. Over 75% of pupils have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than usually found. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties is just below the national average, but those with a statement of educational need is just above the national average. Children start school with levels of attainment that are well below those expected for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an improving school which gives a satisfactory standard of education to its pupils. It has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses under the perceptive leadership of the headteacher. In the light of improvement, particularly in the last year there is good capacity to improve further. The school has raised standards in information and communication technology (ICT), turning a concern from the previous inspection into a strength. It has initiated new rigorous systems and procedures and has demonstrated a good track record of dealing with weaknesses in teaching.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. However, as the school is already aware, there is significant underachievement in mathematics. The leadership of the subject lacks a systematic approach to raising standards and the quality of teaching varies too greatly from class to class. Standards overall are also satisfactory but insufficiently high in mathematics. Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress, though their skills are still below average by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils with English as an additional language do particularly well and those with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress.

Pupils' personal development is good. Generally, they behave well and enjoy their learning. Their contribution to the community is also good. High-quality basic skills in ICT and average levels in English prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education. However, basic skills in mathematics require improvement. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Low expectations and limited teaching styles were evident in some lessons which impacted on pupils' progress. However, excellent use was made of new interactive white boards in some classrooms which really motivated the pupils. A new system of assessing and keeping a check on pupils' progress is supporting the drive to raise standards, but has not yet had time to be fully effective. There is still much to do to improve the accuracy of teacher assessment, particularly at the end of Year 2.

The curriculum is enriched both inside and outside the classroom, especially with sporting activities and music. There is a good mix of art and design and technology. Visits and visitors enhance the curriculum well. Care and guidance are satisfactory overall. The school takes good care of its pupils but, as the school has rightly identified, more needs to be done to improve academic guidance.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear vision of the priorities for school improvement and has worked hard to bring about progress. She leads the school well and self-evaluation is good. Priorities for improvement are clear and there is a logical plan of action. However, the work of some subject leaders is not effective in raising standards. Governors are supportive and they carry out their responsibilities satisfactorily.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics and improve the management of the subject.

- Improve some important aspects of teaching especially in raising teachers' expectations and providing greater variety in the styles of learning on offer.
- Ensure that teacher assessment is more accurate so that pupils' progress can be tracked more precisely.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Most pupils join the school with skills much lower than those usually found. The achievement of pupils in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, although standards are still below average when they enter Year 1. There is a discrepancy between the standards and progress noted by inspectors at the end of Year 2 with what the performance data shows. This is the result of inaccurate teacher assessments and has rightly been identified by the school as an area for improvement. Overall, achievement is satisfactory between Years 1 and 6, but in mathematics pupils underachieve. By the end of Year 6, standards overall are slightly below average but in mathematics, they are not high enough. Pupils with English as an additional language progress well towards their targets because of the effective support they are given. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' attitudes are positive and they enjoy school because they can socialise with their friends and participate in some of the many clubs on offer. They understand the school rules and sanctions and are keen to do well in their work. They behave well in most lessons but are often passive in their learning and lose concentration if the task is not interesting enough. This hampers their progress in acquiring new skills. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall but cultural provision is particularly good. The six week 'African Drumming' project was particularly popular. Pupils feel safe and secure and know who to go to if they have any problems. They are aware of the need for a healthy lifestyle and all have been involved in improving school dinners. One pupil commented, 'We tasted new food and helped with the menu.' As a result, more pupils are eating the healthy school lunches. Pupils' contribution to the community is good. Within school there is an active school council and others work as librarians or 'playground friends'. They raise money for charity and sing carols to the local community at Christmas. Pupils are gaining a range of skills that will equip them for later life, but future economic well-being is hampered because of the lack of basic skills in mathematics. Attendance is above the national average reflecting the support that parents give the school and their child's education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The effective teaching seen in some classrooms was not evident in others. In some lessons, teachers make it clear to pupils what they are expected to learn and the activities provided motivate pupils to do their best. In some lessons, the way pupils are taught results in them losing interest and concentration. Too much time is spent talking to pupils making them passive learners.

Interactive white boards, which are in some classrooms, are used very effectively. Pupils were enthusiastic about these and told inspectors, '...we really like them, it makes lessons much better.' Teaching in ICT is exceptional because of super relationships with pupils and expert subject knowledge. In most mathematics lessons, the expectations of what the pupils can do are too low which impacts on the progress made. Teaching assistants mostly support pupils well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils in the Foundation Stage are stimulated through practical experiences and well-planned play. In Years 1 to 6 there is a broad and balanced curriculum. Art and design and technology are blended well together. Cultural issues are very well planned for and there have been special events which help pupils to appreciate the cultures and beliefs of others. There is a satisfactory range of extra curricular clubs and activities which the pupils enjoy. Pupils take pleasure in going to places of interest and entertaining guest speakers and other visitors in school. The newly installed computer suite has improved provision significantly. ICT is beginning to be used in other subjects and motivates pupils well. However, opportunities for pupils to develop, use and apply their numeracy skills both in mathematics and in other subjects are too infrequent.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Overall, care, guidance and support of pupils are satisfactory although the care shown to pupils is strong. All health and safety issues are addressed including those highlighted at the time of the last inspection. Risk assessments are in place and child protection procedures are clear to all. All adults working in the school are subject to the required checks and safeguards. The behaviour policy and system of rewards are implemented effectively. Support for individual pupils with special needs and English as an additional language is productive and pupils are making appropriate progress.

Academic guidance is a weakness. Current assessments, particularly in Years 1 and 2, are insecure which means that the tracking of pupils and planning for their future academic progress is not as accurate as it needs to be. Senior managers are currently

working on this and new systems recently initiated are robust but have not as yet had an impact. Induction for pupils new to the Nursery is thoughtfully planned and is enhanced by the positive relationship established with parents before their children start.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Since her arrival three years ago the headteacher has formed an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has worked hard to rectify weaker areas. She has successfully led the school through a period of staffing disruption and change. For much of the time she has been without the support of a senior team but now an assistant headteacher is in post, team leaders have been appointed and the school is moving forward. The majority of subject leaders are driving their subjects forward, but the quality of subject leadership is too variable and this is reflected in the results pupils achieve in national tests, particularly in mathematics. In most areas, performance is monitored effectively and improvements are implemented. The headteacher and her assistant have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and assessment and know what needs to be done to improve them. New systems are now in place for staff to track the progress of groups of pupils accurately. This enables extra help to be given to targeted individuals and groups where it will really make a difference.

The governing body is supportive; it now operates more systematically and holds the school to account with more rigour. Governors have worked with the headteacher to clear a significant budget deficit and resources are deployed appropriately. The vast majority of parents support the work the school does.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We enjoyed our visit to your school and thank you for the friendly way you spoke to us. We met groups of pupils and we were very interested in what you had to say. You told us about what you liked and enjoyed and why.

We saw that you behave well in class and around the school and enjoy your lessons. You told us about how you took part in tasting new foods and deciding what went on the new menu in your school. You enjoy going on trips and attending clubs at lunchtime and after school.

Your headteacher leads the school well. Along with her team of managers she aims to help all of you do the best that you can.

We think St Monica's is a satisfactory school. This means it does some things well, but others need to be better. We want the school to help you do even better work in mathematics. We have asked your school to adjust the way teachers teach you so that you can take part in lots more different activities in lessons. You can play your part in this by making sure that you always do your best. Finally, we have asked the school to check carefully on how you are doing at the end of Year 2.

We hope you continue to enjoy your time at St Monica's.

Yours sincerely

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Lead inspector