



St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Stoke Newington

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 100271
Local Authority Hackney
Inspection number 285759
Inspection dates 29–30 November 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 address	Lordship Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Stoke Newington
Age range of pupils	3–11		London N16 0PP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8800 2645
Number on roll (school)	180	Fax number	020 8802 1687
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Fr Jonathan Clark
		Headteacher	Eleanor Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller-than-average school has a nursery and occupies a cluster of buildings on a confined site. It serves a mixed residential area, but also draws pupils from further afield because of its religious character. The vast majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, the largest being Black Caribbean and Black African. Just over a third of pupils, a high proportion, speak English as an additional language. A quarter of pupils have learning difficulties, which is above average. A high number, one third, are entitled to free school meals. The school employs a local charity to work with pupils and parents who may be experiencing a range of difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St. Mary's is an outstanding school that enables all pupils to excel both socially and academically. A parent commented, 'Teachers and parents work very closely together to ensure that the children are getting what they deserve'. The excellent leadership of the headteacher and deputy head sets out the highest expectations of all staff and pupils. By the time they leave Year 6, standards are consistently high and all pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities reach national average standards. This is because there are exemplary systems to monitor the work of the school to ensure that pupils make the expected progress. Achievement is thus outstanding. These exceptionally high results are only 'the tip of the iceberg' according to the chairman of governors, who says, 'The school's a remarkable place'.

The curriculum is outstanding and is very well adapted to meet the needs of pupils from Black African and Black Caribbean minority ethnic groups. The school's innovative behaviour policy encourages pupils to behave well, and they value the rewards they can receive. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties has improved tremendously since the last inspection, and is now outstanding. The level of care pupils receive far exceeds that found in most schools. A diverse and energetic inclusion team caters for every need. This includes a learning mentor, a parental involvement worker and local charity workers. Together they ensure that possible barriers to learning are removed so that pupils can achieve their potential.

Teaching is good. Excellent induction procedures for teachers ensure that pupils' achievement is not affected by the sickness of some senior members of staff. The majority of the extremely rigorous and robust monitoring is done by the headteacher and deputy head. The school is developing the leadership roles of other staff and appointing new middle managers to share this role. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Pupils make a good start in the Nursery because of high expectations and the wide range of experiences they enjoy. Progress slows in the Reception class because activities are not always sufficiently challenging.

The headteacher and deputy head know their school inside out and have made it a vibrant and high-achieving place. In view of their excellent record of raising standards and achievement, the school's capacity to improve is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the role of middle managers to improve teaching in their areas of responsibility.
- Ensure the rate of progress in the Reception class accelerates to equal that in the rest of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities below those expected. Achievement is outstanding because of the good teaching and the extremely effective systems to identify and support any child at risk of falling behind. Progress is good in the Nursery. It slows in Reception because some of the work does not make sufficient demands on the children, but accelerates again in Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2, standards are in line with the national average. Pupils continue to make very good progress in Years 3 to 6. The school sets very challenging targets, which it exceeds. Most of the pupils come from Black Caribbean backgrounds, and they do particularly well. Pupils with learning difficulties make outstanding progress. Those pupils who are learning English as an additional language are very well supported, and also make the same progress as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. They learn Christian values and come together as a whole school in worship assemblies. They enjoy many opportunities to celebrate their own and others' cultures. In music, for example, Year 4 and 5 pupils were composing a reggae song based on the work of Bob Marley. Pupils take plenty of exercise and have a very good understanding of healthy lifestyles. They feel safe in school and have a wealth of people they can turn to with any problems. They thoroughly enjoy school, as rising attendance rates show. These are now above average. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are enthusiastic about their lessons and work very hard. A school councillor said, 'Having our views listened to is a good thing'. Pupils now have new water fountains as a result of their ideas. They are involved with the local church and take part in events in the community, such as the Prom in the Park, when they acted out scenes from 'The Tempest'. Pupils leave the school with exceptionally good basic skills and are extremely well prepared for a life of learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and manage their classes well. They enjoy good relationships with pupils, who are enthusiastic about learning. Teaching is often imaginative and engages pupils' interest. For example, older pupils were drafting interview questions to put to prospective Greek kings ready for role play the next day. The work is well planned to take account of differing abilities, so that all pupils succeed. In mixed age classes, the range of ability is sometimes greater

making it challenging for teachers to pitch the level of challenge exactly. In the case of Year 5 and 6, extra groups are being created to tackle this so that pupils can be taught separately for English, mathematics and science. Teachers maintain a brisk and purposeful pace. Occasionally, however, they spend too long introducing topics so that there is not enough time for pupils to complete their tasks. In the Reception class, questioning does not always extend children's learning and they are not challenged sufficiently to make the same level of progress as occurs in other classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is under constant review to ensure that it remains relevant and balanced. The weaknesses identified at the last inspection have all been dealt with successfully. The curriculum is extremely well adapted to include all pupils and contributes greatly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This particularly benefits the many pupils from Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds, and enables them to achieve outstandingly well. Enrichment is excellent, with many high quality experiences for pupils to enjoy. These include visitors to school, such as storytellers and musicians, and visits out to places of interest, including a subsidised residential trip. Pupils take part in a wide range of clubs. One pupil said, 'The clubs help you with your education'. The school involves the community very well in its provision, through its links with the church and local minority ethnic leaders. There are many good role models for pupils to emulate, and the school raises their aspirations, igniting sparks of ambition for the future. Pupils receive every kind of support so that they can do their best, and are encouraged to play a full part in the life of the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school's exemplary systems for monitoring all aspects of pupils' development mean that support is put in place in a timely way, and its impact measured closely. This is why all pupils achieve so well, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The inclusion team has a wealth of expertise, which benefits vulnerable pupils and their families. One child said, 'I can come here anytime and I know someone will listen to me'. Pupils feel safe and secure and free from bullying and harassment. They are confident that any issues will be dealt with promptly. Pupils know what their targets are, and what they have to do to achieve them. They receive outstanding support and guidance in their work, and are used to discussing their learning needs with staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. A pupil said, 'The headteacher is very good - she takes care of everything!' One of the keys to the school's success is the meticulous way leaders review its performance. Nothing is left to chance. This means

that the headteacher and deputy head have an excellent understanding of where support is needed, and follow up to measure its impact. They value teamwork and involve all staff and governors in an annual review day, when strategic plans for the coming year are agreed. Issues are dealt with as soon as they emerge, and difficult decisions are taken, such as in ensuring that the budget balances. In this leaders are well supported by the governing body, which takes an active role in the life of the school, and holds leaders to account well. Sickness has meant that there is not a full team of middle managers at present, and some appointments are being made for January 2007. Consequently, the senior leaders have had to take on much of the work of monitoring teaching and learning, and are keen to delegate more of this to subject leaders, once they are in post.

The building is unfit for purpose, with cramped classrooms and a convoluted layout that makes it very difficult for staff and pupils alike to do their work. There are excellent links with outside organisations, especially in the care of pupils. One charity worker who supports local families said, 'the school's cooperation is amazing - it is one of the schools which benefits most'.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Thank you very much for making us so welcome at your school. We enjoyed visiting you and think your school is outstanding.

There are so many wonderful things about your school it is hard to know where to start, but here goes ...

- You achieve extremely high standards with your work.
- You want to learn and you work very hard.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you look after one another really well.
- The headteacher and deputy head make a superb team and know exactly how to make your school even better.
- The level of care you receive is absolutely brilliant. This means you can get on with your work without worries.
- The teaching is good and teachers make lessons interesting and fun.
- The school is very successful at giving you all the help you need when you need it.
- You have lots of exciting clubs and visits, and many visitors to inspire you.

We think the children in the Reception class could make better progress if they were expected to do more, like the rest of you. Some of the teachers are away at the moment, but we feel those in charge of subjects like English and ICT need to find out more about what goes on. They will then be able to help teachers to become the best.

We can tell you love your school. It is a very special place.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. N. Butt,

Lead Inspector.