

# Oratory Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100491
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kensington and Chelsea
<b>Inspection number</b>	285814
<b>Inspection date</b>	15 March 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mike Thompson

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	204
School	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Father G Bowen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr P Ward
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 May 2002
<b>School address</b>	Bury Walk Cale Street Chelsea London SW3 6QH
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7589 5900
<b>Fax number</b>	020 7581 5220

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector

## Description of the school

The school, which is in the trusteeship of the Fathers of the Oratory, occupies a building erected more than a century ago on an extremely cramped site within a residential area. Less than half the pupils live in the parish, and their home circumstances are ethnically and socially diverse. More than twenty different nationalities are represented in the school, and over half the pupils have English as a second language. However, there are no pupils in the early stages of learning to communicate in English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is about half the national average. Attainment on entry is above average.

Due to circumstances beyond the school's control, there have been significant changes in the teaching staff over the past two years. Four of the seven classes are now taught by new or relatively inexperienced teachers and, at the time of the inspection, an experienced teacher in one of the other classes was unwell.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Oratory Roman Catholic Primary School provides its pupils with a good education. It has many outstanding features.

There is strong evidence that, in the recent past, the school has enabled its pupils to make exceptional progress. Pupils achieve well, and now make good rather than outstanding progress overall. This is because there is currently inconsistency in the quality of teaching as a result of the changes in staff. Teaching is good overall, and ranges in quality from satisfactory to excellent.

The parents hold their school in high regard. Inspection questionnaires relating to about half the pupils were returned, and almost all of these were overwhelmingly positive. One sums up the views expressed in many others when noting, 'The Oratory is a wonderful place. We are thankful that our children have the benefit of this great school.' The few negative comments largely related to the impact of recent staffing changes on the progress of children.

Standards are high. In recent years the school's performance has placed it securely among the very best primary schools in the country. The school's rigorous systems for checking on pupils' attainment and progress indicate that its performance in this year's national tests is not likely to be quite as good. Nonetheless, attainment remains significantly above what is expected nationally for pupils at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.

An important factor in the school's success is the excellent climate for learning evident in all classes. This stems from the outstanding personal development of the pupils. Their impeccable behaviour and real desire to learn help the school to successfully meet the challenges presented by the extremely cramped accommodation.

Children are given a good start to their education in the Reception class. This is most commendable, given the difficulties presented by the premises. The Reception classroom is on the first floor, and the most accessible area for outdoor learning is the rooftop playground two floors above. Although children are unable to experience integrated indoor and outdoor activities, the school ensures that they have access to the full breadth of the Foundation Stage curriculum. The good provision for these children ensures that they make good progress and attain standards that are well above those expected nationally by the time they move to Year 1.

Despite the constraints of the accommodation, the curriculum is good and is enriched through an excellent range of out-of-class activities. As part of its drive to improve further, the school has begun work to refine its curriculum planning in order to integrate learning in different subjects.

The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support provided for pupils is one of the school's many excellent features appreciated by the pupils. Typical of the remarks made by them, when asked what they value most about the school, was, 'I'm really happy that I come here. If we need help, there's always someone there for us. It's just like home!'

The driving force behind the school's success is the excellent leadership. In particular, the headteacher gives outstanding direction for the work of the school. He receives excellent support from his deputy and experienced senior managers. The management team is now working hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The way in which the school has maintained high standards despite changes in teaching personnel is a clear indication of its outstanding capacity for continued improvement in the future.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching so that more lessons are good or better.
- Further refine curriculum planning in Key Stages 1 and 2 to help ensure that pupils are more readily able to apply their skills across a range of subjects.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards are high in all classes. The school's assessments of children at the end of the Reception year show that, in 2006 for example, almost all attained or exceeded the goals expected in all areas of learning. The least strong area was communication, language and literacy. This was because of the slightly lower than average attainment of a small number of pupils with English as a second language.

Pupils' attainment in the annual assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 is consistently well above the national average. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment in the national tests is exceptionally high. In 2006, for example, the school's performance put it among the top one percent nationally. Achievement is currently good rather than its usual outstanding level. This is because of the present inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning which have resulted from recent and significant staff changes.

Boys and girls achieve equally well, regardless of ethnicity. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because they are given good quality help in meeting their targets.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins all aspects of school life. Particularly noteworthy is the excellent social development of pupils. The school strongly encourages pupils to take responsibility for some important aspects of its provision. For example, members of the school council conduct weekly checks of the attendance registers. They have designed certificates which are then awarded to the class with the best record. The impact of this, together with the school's close monitoring, is seen in the above average overall attendance rate. The school councillors also help promote healthy eating by checking on the contents of pupils' packed lunches. Their efforts have undoubtedly contributed towards the school's recent success in gaining a Healthy School Award.

Pupils are bright and articulate, and extremely proud of the school. None of those interviewed could think of any aspect of the school that needed to be changed for the better. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils said that bullying is extremely rare and, should it ever occur, it is quickly and sensitively dealt with by adults. Pupils also show an excellent awareness of personal safety and the well-being of others. This is clearly seen at morning playtime when, despite the cramped rooftop conditions, they play sensibly and show great consideration for one another.

Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next phase of their education and for a future as life-long learners. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles, know how to keep safe, and have high levels of competence in basic skills.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The school's view that teaching and learning are good was confirmed by the inspection. Some of the teaching is of the highest quality.

There are significant variations in the quality of teaching, which the school is attempting to rectify. The best teaching is invariably that of experienced practitioners. These teachers know their pupils' learning needs very well. As a result, they provide achievable challenges for pupils of all abilities. Their lessons are conducted at a crisp pace, and their good questioning skills routinely challenge pupils to explain the reasoning behind their answers. Where teaching is less successful but satisfactory, teachers are sometimes not clear enough about precisely what they intend pupils to learn. They are also not skilled enough at pitching work at different levels to match the differing needs of their pupils. Consequently, some find the work too easy.

Teaching assistants generally provide good quality help for pupils who are experiencing difficulties with their learning. However, on occasions the help given can be too directive instead of challenging pupils to think for themselves.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Despite the difficulties presented by the accommodation, the school offers many activities to help enrich pupils' education. After-school clubs are popular, and include activities such as ballet, chess, art and choir. The LOOSH (Learning out of school hours) club helps pupils gain confidence as learners through a range of fun activities. In addition, there is expert tuition in a wide range of musical instruments. The school also makes excellent use of the local community. For example, during the 'Willing to Work' project, parents spoke to the pupils about their occupations and pupils visited some of their places of work. A 'One World Week' celebrated the rich cultural diversity within the school by making use of parents' skills and first-hand experiences of life in other countries. The school's participation in 'Ocean World', a musical with an ecological theme, provided Year 4 with the memorable experience of joining with pupils from other schools in the borough to perform at the Royal Albert Hall.

The school acknowledges that the day-to-day curriculum needs to be improved to add extra interest and relevance to pupils' learning. Work to integrate learning in different subjects is at an early stage of development.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

A strong Catholic ethos underpins all that the school does. It provides excellent pastoral care for its pupils. The procedures to ensure their safety and well-being are rigorous. The quality of academic guidance given to pupils is also excellent. This is based on thorough systems for assessing each pupil's academic performance. All pupils have targets to reach, and their progress in meeting them is regularly reviewed.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

A number of parents commented on the headteacher's outstanding leadership. He ensures that the effectiveness of the school is constantly reviewed and action taken whenever needed. The impact of his leadership is seen in the outstanding progress made by pupils in previous years, and the way in which the school is sustaining exceptionally high levels of performance despite the recent changes in teaching personnel. This happens because the senior management is highly effective in providing excellent support in a very focused way. Currently, this support is helping to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning. The governors are well informed and successfully fulfil their role as critical friends.

The leadership of the school ensures that all pupils, regardless of ability, are fully included and equally valued. For example, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities play a full part in activities because of the extra help they are given. Those with particular talents have these recognised and developed.

The school is extremely good at targeting its resources carefully and doing what it can to overcome the challenges presented by its cramped accommodation. For example, the initiative to hire the adjacent sports area provides pupils with valuable space for outdoor physical education and improved recreational opportunities at lunchtime.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
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	2
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 for helping me so much when I came to inspect your school to find out how well you are getting on. I particularly enjoyed visiting your lessons, looking at your work and talking to some of you during lunch time. I agree with your parents that you go to a good school.

There is so much I like about your school that I can't mention everything, so here is a list of what I think are the most important things.

- You do well in your work, and when you leave school at the end of Year 6 your results are among the best in the country. You should be very proud of this.
- Everyone in your school is friendly and welcoming. You behave exceptionally well and get on really well with each other.
- You learn well in lessons because much of your teaching is good.
- The school is good at organising lots of interesting things for you to do.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are really well looked after.
- Your headteacher and all of the other people who help run your school do an excellent job and make sure that you get a good education.

All of the adults in your school want it to be even better. To help them to do this I think that the most important thing to do next is to help teachers to become even more expert in their teaching. This will help them to make even more of your lessons good or excellent. It will also mean that you will have to do a lot more thinking. However, I'm sure that you are ready for the challenge! The school also wants to improve the way that activities are planned for you. It is going to do this by linking subjects together. I think that this is an excellent idea.

I am sure that you will continue to have great success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

M Thompson. Lead Inspector