

St Mary Abbots CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100497
Local Authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	285817
Inspection date	28 March 2007
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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	210
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Gillian Craig
Headteacher	Mrs N Doyle
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2001
School address	2 Kensington Church Court Kensington London W8 4SP
Telephone number	020 7937 0740
Fax number	020 7937 9142

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small popular school serves a predominantly prosperous residential area. It occupies a listed building set in a secluded churchyard. One third of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A fifth of pupils speak English as an additional language, the main one being Serbo-Croat. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. Fewer pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities than is typically found. The school holds awards for teaching basic skills and for promoting sport.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This excellent school has many outstanding features. It is a haven of peace hidden away among the commercial heart of Kensington and has the family atmosphere of a village school. Parents adore it. One wrote, 'My daughter loves school and has made tremendous progress.' The achievement of pupils is outstanding and standards are exceptionally high year after year, despite small year groups whose abilities change. The key features of the school's success are the very high quality of the teaching and the excellent leadership provided by the headteacher and deputy head. Together they have built a highly effective team of dedicated staff who know the pupils inside out, and who work tirelessly to give them the very best education.

Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and their personal development and well-being are outstanding. They treat one another and adults with respect and go out of their way to be helpful. Despite the limitations of the building and the small playgrounds, pupils are considerate and get along together harmoniously. Pupils are very knowledgeable about healthy living and feel safe, knowing there are adults they can turn to with any problems. They thoroughly enjoy school. As one pupil said, 'There are lots of exciting things going on, really fun lessons and trips.' The excellent curriculum is designed to stimulate and interest pupils and takes full account of the needs of those who speak English as an additional language. All pupils are included extremely well. The very high level of enrichment adds to their great enjoyment of school. Pupils play an important role in the local community through links with the neighbouring church, taking part in civic activities and in helping others.

The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are outstanding. Their progress is tracked very carefully, and when needs arise they are met promptly and effectively. Marking of work is often exemplary, giving pupils a very clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. The provision of information and communication technology (ICT) is particularly good, and pupils attain high standards, a great improvement since the last inspection. Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding so that the youngest children's enthusiasm is ignited from the very beginning.

Leaders have a very accurate view of the school's performance, based on highly effective assessment of its work. This feeds into incisive and well constructed strategic plans that help the school to continue to excel. Some of the subject coordinators are newly appointed and beginning to make a positive impact as they develop their monitoring skills. Governance is excellent as a result of a highly capable proactive governing body, which has notably high expectations of the school and its leadership. Exceptionally high standards have been maintained over time, and the school's capacity to improve is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the monitoring skills of new coordinators so that they have an even greater impact on pupils' standards and achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and standards are consistently exceptionally high. Children enter the Reception class with abilities that are above average. They are given exciting and challenging activities to do that enable them to make rapid progress. By the end of Year 2 standards are

well above average and pupils continue to achieve exceedingly well between Years 3 and 6. For the past five years standards have been exceptionally high in national tests in Year 6, and value added has placed the school among the top five per cent of schools. Pupils achieve so well because teachers have very high expectations of them and because of their enormous thirst for knowledge. All groups of pupils do extremely well, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Standards in ICT are exceptionally high as a result of the excellent provision.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's Christian values underpin its work and help to create a very caring ethos where all pupils are valued as individuals. Pupils take part in a weekly Eucharist at the church, and admire the miracle of Creation in displays and in the school grounds, where they tend the gardens and won a 'London in Bloom' award. Pupils are very well informed about the dangers of substance abuse and smoking, and explained the risks posed by exposure to strong sunlight. They participate in many sporting clubs and have enjoyed success in tournaments. Pupils have designed award winning posters for road safety campaigns. They feel free from bullying and enjoy socialising. One pupil commented, 'Everyone is friends with each other.' The school has done well to clamp down on disruptive term-time holidays, so that attendance has improved. The school council runs its affairs very professionally, recently trialling and selecting a rucksack for the school to market. The Ketchup Working Party is due to issue its report soon. Pupils perform at the Royal Albert Hall and sing for the elderly. They leave the school with extremely good basic skills as well rounded young citizens relishing the opportunities that lie ahead for them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. There are excellent relationships between pupils and staff, so that lessons become an adventure of discovery and pupils want to do their best. One pupil remarked, 'The teachers have helped me learn loads.' Teachers have extremely high expectations, which are reflected in their detailed plans and in the quality of their marking. Pupils are encouraged to review one another's work and are fully involved in their learning. The questioning of pupils is probing and gets them to think, often targeted at individuals. Pupils cooperate together very well and show respect for one another's views. In an outstanding lesson, Year 6 pupils collaborated together in devising an interactive presentation of an original poem combined with digital graphics and sound files. Not only were their ICT skills highly developed, but they also worked as highly effective teams. The teaching assistants and Nursery Officer have a wealth of experience and make a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning. The lessons are exciting and fun, and enable pupils to make outstanding progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. Intelligent links are made across subjects to extend pupils' learning, and educational visits are built in to enrich pupils' experiences. During the inspection, Year 2 pupils were following up a visit to a local ecology centre in English lessons by composing

riddles around minibeasts, and writing captions to illustrations. Year 6 pupils wrote historically accurate war diaries in preparation for a visit to the Imperial War Museum. The curriculum encourages pupils to be inventive and promotes their independence. They undertake research projects at home, such as investigating Roman villas and building a model. These activities contribute extremely effectively to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their outstanding achievement. Two thirds of pupils take part in at least one of the many clubs on offer, including Spanish, drama, Latin, problem-solving and touch-typing. Music and sports are taught by specialists to a high standard. All the pupils in Years 3 to 6 receive a French lesson each week. The older pupils benefit from a residential visit to the countryside where they can take part in adventurous activities and learn to live together away from home.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

A parent spoke for many when stating, 'All the staff are approachable and dedicated to the school.' A striking feature of the school is its happy atmosphere, the laughter of children among the mouldering graves of the churchyard. Pupils appreciate the support they receive from staff. One said, 'Staff are very helpful if you get hurt.' The level of care they receive is reflected in the kind way they support one another. Robust procedures are in place to safeguard pupils. Their needs are identified promptly, and a good range of groups run to support them, including a before school spelling club. The new special educational needs coordinator is exceedingly well organised and has made welcome changes to sharpen up individual education plans. Pupils know what their targets are and are given excellent advice on how to improve. Pupils who are learning English achieve particularly well because they are so well supported.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher and deputy head form a highly effective team and have set out a clear vision for the school based on enabling each child to fulfil his or her potential. There is no resting on laurels. The building may be three hundred years old, but the education offered is modern and vibrant. Staff respond very well to this forward-thinking leadership, so that policies and procedures are implemented consistently across the school. This in turn contributes to the high quality of the provision and to pupils' outstanding achievement. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work. One said, 'Parents are actively involved and consideration is always given to their many suggestions.' Monthly open days enable parents to come in and see how their children are progressing. The school also puts on educational evenings for them, which are well supported, such as one entitled 'How to reduce stress at home.' The governors have been instrumental in securing funds to refurbish the school's hall, and suggested organising the school development plan along the same lines as the school's summary of its self-evaluation processes. Their close monitoring of the school's work, and the considerable expertise they bring to bear, means that they are extremely effective in their role as a critical friend to the leadership team.

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Annex A

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	1
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?	1
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.

Annex A

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	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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 me so welcome at your school. I would particularly like to thank the boy who helped me when I was lost and the girl who kindly offered me her seat so that I would not be tired watching the end of a lesson. These acts of kindness are typical of the caring and considerate way that you treat one another. You attend an excellent school. I cannot praise it enough. Here are some of the things I particularly like about it.

- The exceptionally high standards you reach in your learning.
- The way you make such outstanding progress in your studies.
- Your excellent behaviour and the very rich relationships in the school.
- The high quality teaching that goes on so that lessons are exciting and fun.
- The very effective curriculum, which combines visits to places of interest with stimulating work in the classroom.
- The way teachers tell you exactly what you need to do to improve.
- The way you use ICT in your work across different subjects.
- The leadership of the headteacher and deputy head is outstanding.
- It is a very caring school, like a village school in the heart of the big city.
- The close links with the church and the local community.
- The many clubs you enjoy and your success in the sports and the arts.

Your school didn't get this good by accident. It is because of the extremely hard work of all the adults in the school, the great support from your parents, the governors and the local community, and most of all, because of your insatiable desire to learn (you can look that word up in a dictionary if you don't already know what it means!). The teachers check on how things are going very well, and I am encouraging them to get even better at this so that they know even more what can be improved.

Thank you once again for your help. My very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Butt, Lead Inspector