

St Agnes's RC School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101332
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	286034
Inspection date	4 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Charalambos Loizou

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	340
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs H Datta
Headteacher	Mrs C A Jordan
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2001
School address	Thorverton Road Cricklewood London NW2 1RG
Telephone number	020 8452 4565
Fax number	020 8830 6709

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a larger-than-average size primary school. The pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and the proportion learning English as an additional language is high compared with most schools. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average. The school has a Nursery for three-year-old children who all attend part-time. The school has close links with the local parish community and has international links with two European schools. There has been a high turnover of staff in the last two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St. Agnes's is an outstanding school. Pupils achieve extremely well, reach high standards and mature into courteous young people. They show caring attitudes and excellent behaviour. The school's strong Catholic ethos underpins the staff's commitment to pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Regardless of background or ability, pupils make excellent progress in their academic and personal development. The inclusion of all pupils is reflected in the high quality of care, guidance and support provided by very skilled teachers and teaching assistants.

There is outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher provides excellent leadership, and together with the deputy headteacher and governors, has guided the school extremely well since its last inspection. Despite the turnover of staff, standards and teaching have improved very well. The school's modest evaluation of its effectiveness reflects the high expectations of staff and no complacency in their efforts to move the school forward to even greater heights. Parents express a high level of satisfaction. 'St. Agnes's is the best. Parents have fantastic relationships with teachers', 'Since they came to this school, my children have improved so much', and 'This school is still excellent which is down to great teachers and a dedicated headteacher', are just a few of many tributes expressed by parents.

Standards in English by the end of Year 6 are extremely high and they are well above average in mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). The vigilant leadership team identified that standards in mathematics are not as high as those in English. They devised an effective intervention programme to support pupils of average ability in mathematics. This is working well as standards are rising, although there is scope for further improvement in developing pupils' calculation and problem solving skills.

Children in the Foundation Stage make excellent progress. The high quality of teaching and care ensures that the pace of learning is rapid throughout the Nursery and Reception classes. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 build on this outstanding start so that standards by the end of Year 2 are above average. Throughout the school, an excellent curriculum and outstanding teaching provide a rich programme of activities and lessons that pupils enjoy enormously. Extra-curricular activities provide outstanding opportunities for pupils to take part in music, drama, dance and sport, or to learn another language such as Spanish. 'It's really great, you can learn anything here', says one pupil. The school helps pupils to support the wider community through fund raising and improving the local environment, for example, when pupils designed the nature garden. Pupils are well trained to manage the school bank and promote the 'stash the cash' programme, developing prudent saving habits that prepare them well for the future. Older pupils engage in public speaking events and debate that improves their confidence and communication skills. A promotional computer presentation designed and expertly delivered by pupils to families new to the school improves their confidence in using ICT skills. Junior road safety officers and the national healthy schools award demonstrate the pupils' excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and safe.

There are excellent partnerships with parents and the parish community. Governors are highly effective and a real asset. Pupils' views are sought and their involvement as school councillors, prefects and monitors enables them to play a full part in the development of the school. The school's capacity to keep on improving is excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their calculation and problem solving skills to reach and maintain high standards in mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and pupils reach high standards by the end of Year 6. Children join the school in the Nursery and Reception years with skills and knowledge that are below average. The children make excellent progress towards the early learning goals expected of five-year-olds. Standards in all areas of learning are above average by the time they start Year 1. Pupils make excellent progress in reading, writing and mathematics to reach above average standards by the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 6, standards are very high in English and well above average in mathematics, science and ICT, which represents substantial success. Teachers use highly effective and consistent methods to teach reading and writing which accounts for pupils' excellent progress in English. Standards are relatively lower in mathematics because some pupils lack the confidence to apply their calculation and problem solving skills. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language make rapid progress because they are monitored and supported extremely well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils enjoy school very much, which is reflected in their good attendance. They are extremely well behaved and considerate to each other. Pupils feel valued and safe, as one commented, 'There is always an adult that you can go to if you are worried'. They are given important responsibilities and show initiative, for example, as road safety officers, prefects or 'buddies' to support younger pupils. School councillors thrive on the opportunity to represent the views of their classmates. They demonstrate maturity when suggesting ways to improve the school, as one explained, 'We thought of ways of reducing queuing at lunchtime'. Pupils are mindful of their responsibilities to the wider community and environment. Members of the ECO council suggest ways to improve the grounds and nature garden. The extensive range of out-of-school activities, clubs and visits enable pupils to develop an excellent understanding of healthy living and the importance of exercise. Strong community cohesion reflects pupils' very good understanding of cultural diversity and tolerance of other views and beliefs.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The teaching across the school and Foundation Stage is excellent. Teachers plan tasks in lessons that are well matched to pupils' abilities. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were all challenged to formulate ideas that helped them to think of descriptive passages in a highly effective English lesson. Interactive whiteboards are used extremely well to provide visual examples that help pupils understand their learning. For example, Nursery children improve their coordination and ICT skills using the whiteboard to 'dress teddy'. Good questioning by teachers extends pupils' thinking and teachers continually check how well pupils understand their learning. Pupils

regularly share ideas in lessons with their 'talk partners'. Role-play and drama are used extremely well to develop literacy skills. This was seen to very good effect in an outstanding English lesson in Years 1 and 2 when a pupil, acting as the 'big bad wolf', was quizzed by other pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those learning English as an additional language are supported very well by highly skilled support staff.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an excellent curriculum. It is enhanced by an extensive range of enrichment that includes the creative arts, sport, visits and visitors. Foundation Stage staff provide a stimulating range of activities for the children and a very good balance of indoor and outdoor activities. Personal, social and health education is promoted extremely well in subjects and extra-curricular activities. The leadership team identified weaknesses in mathematics and have introduced ways for pupils to develop their problem solving skills. There is a very strong emphasis on the creative curriculum which is reflected in the high standards of pupils' artwork displayed around the school. The performing arts and music are used very effectively to widen pupils' experiences and interests. This is enhanced by visits, for example, to the opera, or choir performances at Westminster Cathedral. The school is very committed to the diversity of cultures of its pupils and those in the wider world, as when the pupils practised their African drumming recently.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care and guidance, as one regular visitor remarked, 'The school goes that extra mile to ensure that children are well cared for in a thriving environment'. The staff are vigilant and provide excellent support so pupils feel settled and at ease in school. Very good attention is paid to child protection and to risk assessments, for example, the headteacher and leadership team are devising ways to help pupils use the Internet safely. Assessment is used extremely well to track pupils' progress and to identify pupils who need intervention and support. One pupil said, 'Teachers are very good at helping us, and we also help each other in class'. Pupils have a very clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management including governance are outstanding. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work as a highly effective team. They have been successful in sharing their vision with the staff and school community. Their high expectations largely explain their modest assessments of the school's effectiveness. In fact, the school knows itself very well, which is reflected in the high quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement. Priorities for improvement take full account of the views of pupils, parents and staff. Robust assessments of pupils' performance and highly effective monitoring and development of teaching have ensured that standards improve. Governors hold the school to account extremely well and provide highly effective support. Very good systems are in place to ensure that they monitor the school's performance. Governors and parents contribute greatly to the life of the school, for example, when training the school bank officers. Resources are of very good quality and

excellent improvements to the school building have created a positive learning environment. Resources for ICT are used very well and this is another excellent improvement since the last inspection.

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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

16 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Agnes's RC School, London, NW2 1RG

I was very pleased to visit your school. You made me feel really welcome. Yours is an outstanding school. You all work very hard with your teachers and I agree with the many parents who say that your school is an excellent place to learn and play. Your art work is fantastic and I was very impressed with the numerous awards you have been given for a wide range of things like music, public speaking, sport, dance and drama, well done. There are so many good things about your school that it is hard for me to pick out the very best. However, these are just a few of the ones I was pleased with most:

- you are extremely well behaved, polite and considerate
- I agree with you when you say your teachers are brilliant because they are helping you to reach high standards
- you enjoy school and I can see why; there are lots of things to do, even before and after school
- I really enjoyed the assembly, your singing, prayers and drama work
- I was very impressed with the school council and how it helps to improve the school; the councillors have come up with some great ideas
- I really enjoyed watching the special computer presentation - well done to those pupils - I can see why parents new to the school are impressed with what you have learned in school
- your parents are very pleased with you and your teachers and the school works very closely with them
- the staff take excellent care of you and make sure you are all safe and happy
- the headteacher, staff and governors manage the school extremely well and work hard to keep looking for ways to make the school even better.

I have asked your teachers to:

- help some of you do even better in mathematics.

Well done and I wish you all the very best.

Yours sincerely,

Charalambos Loizou Lead Inspector