



St Michael and St Martin RC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102531
Local Authority Hounslow
Inspection number 286414
Inspection date 20 September 2006
Reporting inspector Sean O'Toole

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Belgrave Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Hounslow
Age range of pupils	3-11		TW4 7AG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02085729658
Number on roll (school)	470	Fax number	02085721982
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Angela Mooney
		Headteacher	Mrs Eileen Mullarkey
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This larger-than-average school admits pupils from a wide area and from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals. A percentage has learning difficulties. A high proportion is from minority ethnic backgrounds but few are at an early stage of learning English. Pupils start school with a wide range of abilities, their overall attainment on admission is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The dedicated and high performing staff team are responsible for the school's outstanding success in providing high quality education. Each year the national test results put it among the highest performing schools. Behind these impressive results are excellent teaching and a vibrant and outstanding curriculum which enable pupils of all abilities and backgrounds to make substantial gains in their learning. Parents perceptively summed up the school's ethos by saying, 'No child is pigeon-holed....everyone counts and is treated as an individual.'

Pupils' personal development and well being are outstanding. Their gifts and talents are nurtured and those who find learning difficult are given high quality support. By the time they leave the school, pupils have developed into well-rounded individuals because of their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural qualities. Behaviour is exemplary, and as several echoed, 'Bullying is extremely rare because we get on well together.' Friendly relationships are the norm and the 'Play Pals' scheme is just one example of how pupils' take responsibility and show pride in everything they do. They are excellently equipped for the future to cope with academic and social challenges.

Right from the start, the children in the Foundation Stage blossom as enthusiastic learners who thrive and enjoy all the school provides. They make brisk progress and are secure in all of the areas of learning by the time they start in Year 1. The pace does not slacken in the rest of the school and pupils make rapid progress, culminating in very high standards in English, mathematics and science. Pupils are such effective learners because of high calibre teaching and assessment which pinpoints the next steps in learning. As one girl said, 'Work is just at the right level. I feel that the teachers know all about me.'

Based on its track record of success and the staff's determination not to rest on their laurels, the school has excellent capacity to improve. Issues raised in the previous inspection have been robustly tackled resulting in a much improved curriculum. Leadership and management are outstanding in most respects. They are backed by good governors. However, the school's current long term plans are not focused enough and lack sharp and measurable targets, which hampers accurate assessment of the school's performance by governors and senior staff. Conversely, the excellent level of pastoral care has ensured that every child feels safe and secure.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen up long term plans to include robust measures of success which provide a clear benchmark against which staff and governors can accurately evaluate the school's performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Although the school, too modestly, graded achievement and standards as good, pupils attain very high standards in English, mathematics and science in national tests at the end of Year 6. Other data which tracks the pupils' performance since they were in Year 2 shows that they achieve outstandingly. In the tests in 2005 a small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds made less progress than their peers and the more able did not attain as well as expected in English. The school has tackled these issues rigorously through providing extra support and extending the range of writing opportunities. Consequently, test results this year are much higher.

Pupils with learning difficulties benefit from excellent support. Almost all of these pupils attain at least average standards by the time they leave the school, due in no small measure to the skill of the support staff. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds also excel. They contribute much in lessons showing a secure grasp of English.

From a secure start in the Foundation Stage pupils in Years 1 and 2 grow in confidence. By the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above average. Throughout the school pupils' have appropriate skills in using computers and make good use of them for research.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils love coming to school and their attendance is above average. They enjoy every aspect of school life and participate eagerly in all it has to offer. Their enthusiasm spills over into their appreciation and support of the local and wider communities. Clubs are well attended and pupils speak fondly of their teachers who willingly give up their time. Sports clubs contribute much to pupils' good fitness levels. Pupils are justifiably proud of their accomplishments in helping to improve school meals and in improving the playground which have contributed to the award of healthy school status. Another success has been the award winning travel plan; the prize has been used to fund improved playground equipment and outdoor resources for the Foundation Stage.

Pupils' highly developed academic skills prepare them very effectively for secondary school. Their positive attitudes make lessons a delight and pupils willingly contribute ideas, knowing that they will be valued. Polite and considerate behaviour is the norm and is underpinned by a deep concern for others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers' expectations are high and pupils live up to them. Lessons are planned thoroughly and the work is matched carefully to pupils' abilities. Staff in the Foundation Stage plan a very good balance between formal and creative work and encourage the children to be independent. Throughout the school, staff are very good at guiding pupils on how to improve. A particularly good factor in raising achievement is the use of success criteria in lessons so that pupils can judge how well they have done.

Every pupil spoken to commented that, 'Teachers make learning fun.' In a spellbinding English lesson in Year 6, the teacher stimulated a fantastic response by setting demanding tasks which inspired pupils to produce poetry of high quality. A hallmark of the successful teaching is the way that staff question pupils, get them thinking and expect well reasoned responses. These techniques work especially well for support staff working alongside those with learning difficulties. Staff skilfully use a range of materials and aids to move learning on and look for ways to motivate their pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The rich and varied curriculum meets everyone's needs. Pupils love the extra curricular activities and opportunities to take part in visits and special events. They are proud of their good success in sporting competitions and the large number learning musical instruments show obvious pride in their achievements. There has been a strong focus on developing pupils' creative skills and the opportunities for dance, art and music has done much to extend learning. The excellent provision for personal, social, health and emotional development underpinned through the SEAL project (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) equips pupils to deal with sensitive and personal issues. Many of these aspects are supported through the excellent links with the parish and connections with other schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and contribute much to pupils' academic and personal development. There are robust systems to check on the suitability of staff and to ensure that all pupils are taught in a safe and healthy environment. There is rigorous attention to detail in risk assessments and health and safety.

Special attention is given to those with learning difficulties. As one mother said, 'Everything is for the children no matter how bright they are, or where they come from.' Pastoral care is of high quality and pupils especially value the 'bubble times' when they have a confidential meeting with a teacher if they are worried. Linked to this exceptional practice is the robust assessment of academic progress. Pupils'

strengths and weaknesses are accurately identified and support or extra challenges are provided.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The foundations of the school's success lie in the staff's commitment to meeting the needs of all. They are ambitious for the pupils' success in their personal and academic development and set challenging targets which are met. The school has an excellent track record of achieving high standards which has been maintained through revamping the curriculum, guiding teachers through effective monitoring and restructuring the senior leadership team. The leadership has steered the school through significant staff changes and created a strong and purposeful team. Governors play their part well in supporting the school and have recently introduced more monitoring. However, the school's long term plans lack precise measures for the governors to use to assess the school's performance. This lack of clarity has led to inaccuracy in judgements about effectiveness.

Management at all levels is efficient and staff respond eagerly to new initiatives and responsibility. Areas such as the provision for pupils with learning difficulties are managed very well and support staff are fully involved. Initiatives to lift the performance of the more able and minority ethnic groups have worked very effectively.

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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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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.

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	2
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 for making me so welcome in your school and talking to me about your feelings, ambitions and thoughts. It was a delight to meet you and I really enjoyed looking at your work and joining in your lessons. It was quickly obvious from my conversations with you, the school council and your parents that you go to an outstanding school where everyone is valued.

Your school is highly successful in lots of ways, especially in creating a happy atmosphere.

- Your behaviour, relationships and attitudes to everyone around you are outstanding.
- The quality of your work and test results are among the top schools.
- Your teachers work very hard to make learning interesting and you respond enthusiastically.
- Because everyone cares for everyone else there is a special feel to your school and newcomers quickly feel at ease.
- You obviously relish the opportunities to take part in a wide variety of activities. As one girl wrote, 'I joined drama because before I was really shy and now I'm not.'
- The prefects, school councillors and 'play pals' help enormously in making the school a success.

Although just about everything is really good in your school I have asked the staff and governors to find better ways of planning for the future and of keeping a check on how well they are doing.

I wish you well in the future and hope that you will always be as happy as you are at St Michaels' and St Martin's.

Sean O'Toole

Lead Inspector