

Our Lady and St Joseph Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100264
Local Authority	Hackney
Inspection number	307345
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	David Mankelow

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	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss P Toomey
Headteacher	Mr S Flood
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2004
School address	Buckingham Road London N1 4DG
Telephone number	020 7254 7353
Fax number	020 7249 3870

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school. Proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those with English as an additional language are above average, as are the proportions with a variety of learning difficulties and those eligible for free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Our Lady and St Joseph's is a good school. A major strength is the exemplary pastoral care that staff provide. This high level of care results in pupils' outstanding personal development and this contributes to their good achievement. Adults and pupils follow the school's motto, 'shine with love, kindness and respect', which, alongside the strong Catholic ethos and good achievement, means that pupils leave the school well prepared for their future lives. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in above average levels of attendance. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, a typical comment being, 'It does a fantastic job in teaching my son, who just loves going to school. He feels safe and cared for, like a home from home really.' Staff pay particular attention to the school environment, spending a good deal of time displaying pupils' work which successfully encourages them to present it neatly and be proud of their achievements. The school grounds are maintained very attractively which is a sign of the commitment of the staff, the parents and other community members, and adds to pupils' enjoyment of school.

A small proportion of children enter the Nursery with skills above the expected level for their age but an increasing number have skills that are well below expectations. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and standards are generally above average by the time they move on to their secondary schools. This is because the teaching is good. Teachers use their good subject knowledge in lessons to ensure that explanations are clear and well understood. Teachers assess pupils' work accurately and regularly. They mark work conscientiously and supportively, telling pupils how well they have done. In most classes, marking gives pupils information about what they need to do next in order to improve their performance but this is not consistent across the school. Also, on occasions, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to act on the teacher's comments which reduces the effectiveness of the marking.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and covers all statutory requirements. There is a good range of well attended extra-curricular clubs that promote pupils' excellent social development and help them to adopt high levels of healthy lifestyles. However, whilst the curriculum is good, and provides details of the knowledge pupils will be learning, it does not provide sufficient details of the progression of skills pupils need to develop, for instance in scientific investigation. This slows pupils' achievement in some subjects.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, very ably supported by his deputy, has been inspirational in developing the skills of the school's subject and key stage co-ordinators to form an effective management team. Senior and middle leaders are all involved in monitoring the work of the school and do so accurately. As a result of their involvement, they all feel very committed to continuing to make improvements by implementing the ambitious development plan and achieving the challenging targets they set themselves. Exceptional care, guidance and support, and pupils' good achievement and outstanding personal development, indicate that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

There are good induction procedures and the Nursery and Reception classes are very safe and secure so children settle quickly and happily into school routines. Excellent relationships ensure

that children play happily alongside each other and enjoy their learning. The 'Happy in Hackney' scheme has been adopted which results in a lot of very active learning. For example, during the inspection children were seen enthusiastically searching for different coloured dinosaurs inside and outside the classroom, engaged in an activity that effectively developed their mathematical skills. Children make good progress in all areas of learning because teaching is effective and there is a good balance between stimulating adult-led and child-inspired activities. Good assessment procedures are being developed but as yet they do not involve all adults in the staff team so are not as effective as they could be in tracking the progress of individual children. The staff are highly committed and continually looking for improvements. They have identified this need and are currently working to resolve it.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement by ensuring that all curriculum plans include details of how pupils' skills should develop.
- Ensure that marking consistently tells pupils what they need to do next and that all pupils are given opportunities to act on teachers' comments.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From their widely differing starting points, pupils make good progress. Standards in Year 2 have been declining, reflecting the declining skills level on admission to the Nursery, especially in writing. The school has recognised this and taken very effective action to overcome it. For example, in 2007, writing scores in Year 2 were below average. As a result of additional support, pupils have made very good progress during Year 3 and many have reached the expected level for their age. Year 6 test results in 2007 were above average overall, especially for the proportions reaching the higher levels. Fewer pupils in the current Year 6 are working at the higher levels but nonetheless, most have made good progress during their time in the school. Teachers and teaching assistants who are well-trained in specific areas of learning difficulty, provide good support programmes for pupils with additional needs and those with English as an additional language. As a result, these pupils make the same good progress as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and wider communities. The school council is particularly effective. For example, having consulted widely across the school, councillors found that there was a need to improve playground equipment. They set about raising funds to achieve this by organising their own cake sales. They gained support from the parents' association and the school governors by making presentations to them. Pupils feel very safe at school because of the high priority that staff place on security. Pupils take very good care of each other and of themselves. Bullying is extremely rare and pupils say that it is handled quickly if it does occur. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Pupils raise significant amounts of money for world charities, for example, for schools and orphanages in Sierra Leone and Asia. The school takes every opportunity to celebrate the rich cultural range within its local community, which results in pupils having an excellent understanding of life in Britain as a diverse society. Despite the challenging circumstances of some families, behaviour

is exemplary in lessons and around the school. Disruption is rare and well managed when it does occur.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is characterised by excellent relationships, which result in pupils' excellent attitudes towards their work. Most lessons are interesting and engage pupils well. They appreciate this, one typically and simply saying, 'Lessons are fun.' Most lessons move at a brisk pace but occasionally this is not the case and progress slows in those lessons. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Apart from leading effective support groups for pupils with specific needs, they provide good support to lower ability groups in class lessons. The school has an effective marking policy but this is not fully implemented in all classes. As a result, marking does not always tell pupils clearly enough what their next steps in learning should be. Sometimes pupils are not given enough time to put right mistakes that marking has identified.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is integrated well with the work of the learning mentor and contributes significantly to pupils' excellent personal development. The curriculum is well adapted for pupils of all ability levels and provides good opportunities to focus on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Particularly impressive is an animated program developed by pupils in Year 2 to help younger pupils learn numeracy skills. ICT is also used well to develop knowledge in other subjects, such as English, mathematics and history. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visits, for example, Year 3 pupils recently visited the National Portrait Gallery. The curriculum ensures good progress in pupils' knowledge but it does not provide sufficient information about how pupils' skills should develop. This reduces achievement in areas such as scientific and mathematical investigations. Staff have already identified this issue and have plans to overcome it.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Procedures for safeguarding pupils are secure and the school provides exceptional and sensitive support to families who find themselves in difficulty. Staff forge excellent partnerships with outside agencies, for example, the Hackney Youth Volunteers and local businesses. These partnerships contribute to pupils' personal development and academic achievement and to their transition from primary to secondary school. The outstanding care provided by all adults means that pupils are happy to approach one of them if they have any worries, knowing that their concerns will be addressed effectively and sensitively. Pupils' progress is tracked well and those in Years 3 to 6 have individual targets which effectively help them to focus on what they need to do next. Target setting for younger pupils is not fully developed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders at all levels are committed to providing for the needs of each individual. As a result, the school is exceptionally inclusive and all groups of pupils achieve well. Typical comments from parents include, 'My child is not just a pupil but a valued individual,' and, 'The children are so happy and it's down to the great management and teachers.' Most governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They provide a good balance between support and challenge, effectively holding the senior leaders to account for pupils' achievement and personal development.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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	2

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?	2
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?	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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

27 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady and St Joseph Roman Catholic Primary School, London, N1 4DG

You may remember that I visited your school a little while ago with another inspector. Thank you very much for telling us all about your school and for making us feel so welcome. I am writing now to tell you what we found.

You and your parents believe that you have a good school and we agree with you. Most of you love coming to school because you know that you are exceptionally well looked after. Teaching is good so you make good progress and reach standards that are higher than a lot of eleven-year-olds by the time you go to your secondary schools. You try your hardest in your work and you know that if you find things difficult the teachers and teaching assistants will help you. Your behaviour is excellent and you take responsibility for lots of things around the school. The school council is exceptionally helpful. We were particularly impressed that you were confident enough to talk to the Parents' Association and the school governors about the extra things that you wanted for the playground.

We have asked your teachers to do two things to make your school even better.

- make sure that you have the skills to do things like carrying out investigations in science
- make sure that they all tell you what you need to do next when they mark your work and give you the chance to carry out what they have said.

You can help your teachers a lot by continuing to behave well and work hard.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Mankelow

Lead Inspector