

St John The Baptist Voluntary Aided CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100266
Local Authority	Hackney
Inspection number	307346
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Daniel Kilborn

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	321
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Angela Large
Headteacher	Mrs Louise Rosen
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Crandall Street London N1 6JG
Telephone number	020 7739 4902
Fax number	020 7729 2347

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most other primary schools. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is significantly higher than most schools. Over half of these pupils have English as an additional language. A few of them are at the early stages of English language acquisition. Most of the minority ethnic pupils are of Black African and Black Caribbean heritage. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties. Many of these pupils have social, emotional and behavioural needs. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a school on the move. It provides a satisfactory and rapidly improving education, having made significant improvement since the previous inspection. There is a successful drive to raise standards and achievement. All adults who work in school have high aspirations for the pupils. The good curriculum excites and motivates the pupils. Personal development and care, support and guidance are good. As one parent wrote, 'St John the Baptist always puts the children first'. Behaviour has improved and is good. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Racial harmony is strong and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils know how to lead a healthy lifestyle and how to stay safe. There are good links with outside agencies and parents. The vast majority of parents are supportive of the school. A few feel that the school does not take account of their concerns and suggestions. This is not supported by evidence from the inspection.

Achievement is satisfactory and has improved over the past three years. However, standards remain below average overall because of pupils' low starting points. On entry to the Nursery, most children have skills that are considerably less well developed than those generally found in three-year-olds. They make good progress throughout the Foundation Stage and most now reach the goals expected for children entering Year 1. By the end of Year 6, standards are below average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils achieve well with their reading. This is because there is consistently good teaching of how to link sounds and letters. There are also regular opportunities for focused group and individual support. The school recognises that standards and achievement in mathematics, science and writing are not yet high enough and is beginning to improve the situation. Pupils are now making better progress in these subjects.

Teaching is satisfactory. The mostly good teaching seen during the inspection matches the school's own evaluation and substantiates an improving picture. However, there are still inconsistencies in teaching. Teamwork and joint planning are good. Teachers are making learning more interesting and relevant to pupils' needs by linking learning across subjects. Relationships are strong and pupils respect their teachers. Teaching that is only satisfactory leads to slower progress. This usually relates to inconsistency in the quality of presentation and the marking of pupils' work, or a lack of challenge for the more able pupils, particularly in mathematics and science.

Leadership and management are good and have improved markedly since the previous inspection. The headteacher has empowered the senior leadership team and governors to play a more significant role in the strategic development of the school. She has built a stable and cohesive staff, who share her vision and commitment to an unrelenting drive for improvement. She has dealt successfully with some challenging staffing and budgetary issues. Self-evaluation is good and based on a wide range of data and monitoring information. This is having a measurable effect on improvements in teaching, learning, standards and achievement. Based on the many improvements since the previous inspection, there is good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

There is a warm and stimulating environment and a good curriculum that engenders confidence and a love of learning. Teaching and learning are good and, on some occasions, they are outstanding. Teaching assistants offer good support and are skilled observers of children's

progress. There is a sensible balance of adult initiated activities and those chosen by the children. Children are encouraged to talk and listen in a variety of groups. Teachers develop children's mathematical understanding through a wide variety of classroom and outdoor activities. There is good provision of first-hand experiences, both indoors and outdoors, and these develop children's skills of investigation and co-operation. Teachers in the Reception Year develop the early skills of reading, writing and mathematics well by introducing appropriate elements of literacy and daily mathematics lessons. The current drive to improve children's mathematical understanding is proving successful. Assessment is good and used successfully to match activities to children's needs. There are good relationships between home and school and these help children settle into school routines well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievements in writing and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching by eliminating the inconsistencies.
- Ensure that there is greater challenge for the more able pupils in mathematics and science.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards have risen steadily over the past three years and achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 2, standards are now close to national averages with reading better than writing and mathematics. In all subjects, however, fewer pupils attain the higher level 3. By the end of Year 6, standards are below average in English, mathematics and science. Since the standards achieved by these pupils at the end of Year 2 were below average, this represents satisfactory overall achievement, but pupils have underperformed in mathematics. The school is aware of this and strategies to improve achievement are beginning to raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress. There are still not enough pupils reaching the higher level 5 in mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve as well as other pupils and their progress improves when they receive additional support. The few pupils who are at the early stages of learning English make good progress from their low starting point.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Good attendance shows that pupils enjoy all the school has to offer. Pupils are confident that adults will deal effectively with any isolated incidents of bullying. There are good opportunities for pupils to be peer mentors and 'buddies'. These help develop respect for right and wrong and for social responsibility. School councillors represent their peers very effectively on the school council. They talk with pride about improvements they have helped to make to the lunchtime menus and to playground development. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles, enjoy a varied physical education programme and an outstanding range of playground activities. They contribute to the school community in many ways, for example, by supporting local church events as well as in the concern they show for the wider community by fundraising for various charities. Their good personal development prepares them well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Much of the teaching seen during the inspection was good. Teachers are working and planning together well. They have a strong determination to improve standards and achievement and teachers' care and aspirations for the pupils shine through. All teachers have good classroom management skills that ensure lessons are calm and orderly. Good teaching assistants who work well with the teachers support this effectively. Resources, including information and communication technology, are used effectively to develop pupils' understanding. Pupils enjoy their learning and many speak enthusiastically about the cross-curricular topics they study. Assessment systems have improved since the previous inspection and are good. In the most effective lessons, good use of success criteria help pupils to assess the quality of their work. However, teaching is only satisfactory overall because of inconsistencies in some aspects. In particular, information from day-to-day assessment is not always used well. This means, for example, that the learning objectives for specific groups are not precise or tailored enough to their needs. At these times, the work is too difficult for the less able pupils and there is a lack of challenge in the work, particularly for the more able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy and respond well to a good curriculum. It responds effectively to the needs of the community and the cultural diversity of the pupils. Pupils speak with enthusiasm and excitement about the many extra-curricular activities, including sport and the arts. These add further enjoyment to learning. The curriculum promotes pupils' personal, social and emotional development effectively and supports healthy living and staying safe. The curriculum for pupils in Year 1 builds successfully upon the practical approaches and structured play in the Foundation Stage. Well-organised intervention strategies, including one-to-one and small group support, ensure good curricular provision for pupils with learning difficulties. This is also true of the pupils who are the early stages of learning English. Teachers are working effectively to further improve the curriculum. They are planning more topics and themes that link learning across subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are effective procedures for keeping pupils safe. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are monitored and reviewed well. The excellent work of the learning mentor helps to ensure a consistent approach to supporting pupils with behavioural difficulties. The school works very well with volunteers and a variety of external agencies to support all children, including those most at risk. Pupils' academic guidance is good overall, although there is some inconsistency across classes. The pupils have their own targets in English and mathematics and these help them assess how well they are doing. The quality of marking is variable, however. Where it is more effective, it informs pupils how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has brought about significant improvements in a relatively short time. Progress has been particularly rapid over the past two years with the formation of a new management team. They and the governors support the headteacher well. They share her drive, vision and determination for further improvement. The use of performance data to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning and the monitoring and evaluation of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. They are helping to improve standards and achievement, and to accelerate pupils' progress. There is a good school improvement plan with a clear focus on how standards and achievement can be raised. Governance has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Governors are increasingly holding the school to account by challenging the senior leaders. They monitor the work of the school much more effectively.

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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?	3
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	3
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?	2

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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

19 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John The Baptist Voluntary Aided CofE Primary School, London, N1 6JG

I am writing to say how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for making us feel so welcome. It was good to see you working hard in lessons and to know that you enjoy school. The school council were particularly helpful and we were impressed with how they had helped improve the playground. We think most of you behave well and we were pleased to see the friendly way in which you play together and care for each other. We think the outdoor play facilities are excellent and know how much you are looking forward to the amazing new climbing apparatus.

We have said that your school is providing a satisfactory education that is improving well. This means that, while there are many good things happening in your school, there are still some important things that can improve.

You are doing well with your reading, music, art and drama. We particularly enjoyed the drumming and dancing in Years 3 and 4 and the film animations. It is clear from what you tell us that you also enjoy all the many sporting activities the school provides. We have asked the teachers to help you more to improve your science, writing and mathematics by making sure your work is not too easy or too hard. We saw some good lessons during our visit and have asked the headteacher to make sure that all your lessons are as good as these. We think some of you could improve the work in your books. We have also asked some of the teachers to ensure that when they mark your books, their comments help you to see how you can improve.

We know how much you like your headteacher and all the staff and are sure that you will do your very best to help them make your school even better.

Daniel Kilborn

Lead Inspector