

St Scholastica Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100274
Local Authority	Hackney
Inspection number	307347
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Goodchild

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	Mrs G Molinari-Monks
Headteacher	Mrs D Brotherton
Date of previous school inspection	2 June 2003
School address	Kenninghall Road London E5 8BS
Telephone number	020 8985 3466
Fax number	020 8533 0014

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Nearly all the pupils at this oversubscribed school are of minority ethnic heritage and speak English as an additional language. The vast majority are of Black or Black British African heritage; those of Black or Black British Caribbean heritage form the next largest group. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is very high. An average proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, though the percentage identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these have communication difficulties or emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Attainment on entry is below average and mobility is greater than in schools nationally. The school has gained Healthy Schools status and the Active Sports award. A new headteacher has been appointed and many new teachers have joined the school since the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The headteacher and senior staff are accurate in judging that this is a satisfactory school. Parents hold the school in high esteem and particularly praise its strong family atmosphere and the high quality of care it provides for their children.

Following the last inspection, the school went through a period of difficulty in recruiting teachers and some classes experienced many changes in staff. This adversely affected the continuity of pupils' education and led to a decline in standards evident in national test results last year at Key Stage 2. The school now has a stable staff and all are committed to raising standards. Overall, achievement remains satisfactory and attainment below average at Key Stage 2. However, there is evidence that standards are beginning to rise, though there is still more to do. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the Nursery and Years 1 and 2 teaching is good. As a result, pupils make good progress in these years and standards at the end of Year 2 are average. The use of assessment information to match work to the next steps in pupils' learning is not consistent in all classes, particularly in Years 3 to 6 where pupils make satisfactory progress. In English and mathematics, gaps in pupils' knowledge mean that, despite their readiness to work hard, they tend to be over dependent on their teachers. In addition, there are variations in the amount of progress different groups of pupils make in lessons. At times higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough, at other times explanations are not thorough enough for lower attainers, or some groups of pupils undertake tasks that are not focused enough to ensure they gain new skills.

A number of programmes have been put in place to support pupils who need additional help, especially to raise standards in reading. However, some initiatives have not been in place long enough to lift pupils' achievement fully. Not all pupils are making as much progress as they should though assessment information shows a significant increase in the proportion of pupils making at least the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and this demonstrates its satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Care, guidance and support are good overall, as are pupils' personal development and well-being. Pastoral care is outstanding, including that for pupils with learning difficulties and for whom English is an additional language. Pupils' behaviour is good and the school is a harmonious and orderly community. Pupils concentrate well in lessons and have very positive relationships with one another and with adults. They make satisfactory progress in basic skills in preparation for moving on to secondary school, grow in confidence and become well-rounded individuals.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher fulfils her role with dedication and is tireless in her efforts to include all pupils as fully as possible. She exudes the Christian values on which the school's work is founded and inspires confidence in staff, pupils and parents alike. The deputy provides good support for the headteacher, and senior leaders are working very well with the local authority in order to raise achievement. Systems have been put in place for tracking pupils' progress so that any pupils who are underachieving can be quickly identified. Self-evaluation is satisfactory and improving as more subject leaders develop the skills to enable them to contribute fully to school improvement. Senior leaders are accurate in their evaluation of the school's main strengths and weaknesses, and regularly check aspects of the school's work in detail. However, monitoring does not always concentrate closely enough on the impact

of teaching on pupils' achievement. In addition, the analysis of data is not yet fully comprehensive, for instance in exploring how well different groups of pupils are doing.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children's achievement is satisfactory and they make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Teaching is satisfactory overall and it is often good in the Nursery. The school's own analysis shows that some children in the Reception year have made limited progress and have gaps in their knowledge. The skilled support of teaching assistants is being used well to counteract this, particularly to develop children's early reading and writing. However, many children are unlikely to reach the standard expected by the end of the Foundation Stage, particularly in communication, language and literacy and in aspects of mathematical development. The range of adult-led and child-initiated activities meets children's needs satisfactorily. Children play together well and show enthusiasm during whole class sessions, but there are limited opportunities for them to engage in challenging problem solving, investigation and independent creative activities. The school has begun to develop the outdoor area, having moved into newly-built accommodation just a week before the inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards throughout the school, especially in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2.
- Sharpen the monitoring of teaching and analysis of data to ensure that learning opportunities are matched consistently to the next steps in pupils' progress.
- Improve provision in the Foundation Stage by increasing the amount of teaching that is good and extending opportunities for children to engage in problem solving, investigation and independent creativity.

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

National test results in Year 2 have fluctuated considerably in recent years. They were broadly average in writing and mathematics in 2007 and below average in reading. Standards at the end of Year 2 are now average in writing and mathematics, though still a bit below average in reading. Year 6 test results fell from average to below average in 2007. Pupils did best in science, where standards were average, and least well in English and mathematics. Though standards currently show an improvement on those revealed by last year's tests, they remain below average in English and mathematics in Year 6. The school is still working to fill gaps in pupils' knowledge that resulted from past weaknesses in teaching. Pupils are unlikely to meet the challenging targets that have been set for them, but there are early signs that achievement is rising as a result of the intensive programmes put in place in reading and improvements in the way teachers mark pupils' written work. Pupils with communication difficulties and for whom English is an additional language benefit from the emphasis placed on speaking and listening, and make similar progress to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have good attitudes to learning and attendance is consistently above average. They respond well to the opportunities the school provides, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are polite, courteous and friendly. They hold firm views about justice and fair play and this responsible attitude contributes well towards creating a happy school. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and play safely together. They know that they can go to any member of staff if they are worried and that something will be done to help them. They say that the school is 'one big family' and 'all the adults are kind'. They make a good contribution to the school community and take their responsibilities seriously. The work of the school council has brought about improvements, for example to games opportunities at lunchtime, and members are particularly conscientious in organising fundraising activities. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their education. They develop positive personal qualities but have only a satisfactory grasp of basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Throughout the school, teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, question them skilfully and provide good opportunities for them to share their ideas with one another. Increasingly, teachers make clear to pupils what is expected of them and involve them in evaluating each other's work. Whilst at Key Stage 1, teaching is good and at times outstanding, it is more variable at Key Stage 2. Time is not always used well enough and activities do not always provide sufficient learning opportunities or build on what different groups of pupils already know. Pupils benefit from the regular intensive support with reading that is provided by teachers and teaching assistants. There are some examples of good teaching in writing, with a newly introduced system for identifying the next steps in pupils' learning. The teaching of mathematics at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A number of initiatives have been introduced to increase pupils' literacy skills, and information and communication technology (ICT) now supports pupils' learning well across the curriculum. The school is in the process of forging links between subjects and increasing opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. A link with a local secondary school, whereby Year 6 uses the school's specialist facilities, supports the good progress that pupils make in science. There is a good range of enrichment activities and strong links with the local community. Pupils regularly visit the local church and take part in projects, for example with the London Symphony Orchestra, as well as participating in sporting activities and music festivals. Pupils with specific talents in science, sports, art and music and are well catered for.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the way the school cares for their children. The staff show a heightened level of sensitivity to pupils' backgrounds and make it clear that they are valued as individuals. Robust procedures are in place for child protection and health and safety. Good support is provided for pupils' with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties so that their difficulties are kept to a minimum. Partnership with parents and outside agencies is a strength, and staff work closely with speech and language therapists to support pupils with communication difficulties. Academic guidance is satisfactory and improving. The school has recently changed the way it marks pupils' work to better inform them about how well they are doing. The recent introduction of individual targets has also helped pupils to become more aware of what it is they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Working closely with the local authority has strengthened senior leaders' vision, raised expectations and increased the sense of shared purpose within the school. In-depth monitoring in English and mathematics has helped to identify what is working well and what needs to be improved, and data analysis has identified where there were previously gaps in curriculum coverage. The regular monitoring of teaching has concentrated almost exclusively on teachers' use of questioning, however, which is now a strength, but insufficiently on the match of work to the learning needs of different groups of pupils or the impact of teaching overall on pupils' progress. Consequently, lesson observation has not yet succeeded in moving the overall quality of teaching from satisfactory to good. Support from a local school is being used well to bring about improvements, for example, in marking, and teachers are now asked to account for the progress pupils are making. Staff have good opportunities to develop additional skills through training and individual support, though lack of subject knowledge remains a barrier to improvement to some extent in mathematics. The school premises are undergoing a programme of refurbishment but some classrooms remain cramped and restrict learning opportunities. The governing body has forged links with subjects and governors regularly visit the school to gather information for themselves. Furthermore, work towards the Governor Mark award is enhancing governors' awareness of their own effectiveness and increasing their skills.

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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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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	3

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?	3
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?	3
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	3
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

12 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St Scholastica Roman Catholic Primary School, London, E5 8BS

Thank you very much for being friendly and helpful when we visited your school. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and we were pleased to see you working hard in lessons and behaving well. These are the main things we found out about your school.

- Yours is a satisfactory school, but the headteacher, governors and teachers are working together to help you make better progress.
- Most of you behave well and work hard in your lessons. You know how to keep yourselves safe and understand how to lead healthy lives.
- Staff take very good care of you and you know that there is always someone to help you if you are worried.
- Those of you in the Nursery and in Years 1 and 2 make good progress. Some of you in Years 3 to 6 have not made enough progress in the past but you are making satisfactory progress now and sometimes you make good progress.

To help the school become better so that you can learn well we have asked the headteacher, governors and staff to do the following things:

- improve the progress you make in Years 3 to 6 and the standards you achieve in English and mathematics
- make sure that teachers always make use of what they know about what you can already do when they are planning lessons
- make sure teaching is always good in the Nursery and Reception classes and provide more exciting activities to help you learn.

You can help by always working hard. Thank you again for your help.

With best wishes

Ms M J Goodchild

Lead Inspector