

Pope John RC School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100355
Local Authority	Hammersmith and Fulham
Inspection number	307372
Inspection date	22 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter McGregor

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	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Murphy
Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Wickham
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2003
School address	Commonwealth Avenue London W12 7QR
Telephone number	0208 743 9428
Fax number	0208 749 7117

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. The inspector looked particularly at pupils' personal development and well being, how effective the quality of teaching is and some elements of other areas, including provision for the Foundation Stage. The inspector met with staff and pupils. Parts of lessons were observed, parents' questionnaires were examined and school information including assessment records and self-evaluation were scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Pope John Roman Catholic School is average in size. An above average proportion of pupils is entitled to free school meals. The number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities - mainly moderate learning, dyslexia, behavioural, emotional and social, and speech, language and communication difficulties - is also above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is very high, as is the number of pupils for whom English is an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Pope John is an outstanding school. Pupils' achievements are excellent, as are their behaviour and personal development. The quality of teaching, the curriculum and the quality of care, guidance and support are also outstanding. Leadership and management are exceptional and are the principal cause of the school's success. The three elements of calmness, structure and routine epitomise all that enables pupils to receive such an outstanding education. Parents say they 'couldn't wish for a better school' a view reinforced by comments such as 'the children's behaviour is second to none which reflects the school's excellent ability to imbue important values'.

Pupils enter the Nursery or Reception classes with skills below the level expected. Many struggle to speak English; many show low levels of personal development. All make rapid and successful progress, because of high quality teaching and intensive support. At the end of Year 6, pupils' standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science. Boys and girls, those with a wide range of additional educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, are all highly successful. In 2007, all pupils in Year 6 attained Level 4 and many reached Level 5 in English. The trend in improvement over the past three years has been excellent. Standards at the end of Year 2 have varied over the past few years. The school has tracked this with great care and confirmed that it reflects variations in background, knowledge and understanding of pupils entering the school.

Pupils are considerate, have very high self-esteem and greatly enjoy school life. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Attendance is good. Pupils explain that they choose not to have enemies, 'so bullying and things like that hardly ever happen'. They know they are safe and understand that school is such a calm place 'because the headteacher likes that' and 'it means we can work hard and learn a lot'. They have adopted extremely healthy lifestyles. All eat the very good school food, sitting down to eat together with staff in a very civilised and enjoyable manner. Fruit is available each day for pupils from the Nursery to Year 2 and often for older pupils as well. Pupils are keen to walk and cycle to school, and sport is very popular, in both physical education lessons and clubs. Year 5 and 6 pupils help in the younger pupils' playground as trained playground partners. School council members meet fortnightly and take their responsibilities very seriously. Pupils are aware of the importance of playing their part in school and more distant communities. They raise substantial sums for charities. As confident, skilled young people who value learning, they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Teachers' expectations are very high, challenging pupils to achieve as much as they can. Lessons are calm and very well organised, with systems and routines rigorously implemented. Interactive whiteboards and digital projector imagery bring lessons alive, capturing pupils' interest. Behaviour is managed in an exemplary manner. Additional adults in classrooms provide very helpful assistance to class teachers supporting groups and individuals. Occasionally, inconsistencies in the extent to which assistants involve themselves in a few pupils' learning mean that progress is not quite as high as it could be. The curriculum provides a rich and interesting experience, including learning Italian as a modern language and a wide, exciting range of visits and visitors. The young enterprise and Victorian days were particularly memorable for pupils, as well as the 'fantastic residential'. Almost all pupils take part in one or more of the many excellent after-school clubs and activities, including Gaelic football.

Care and support for pupils are excellent, with highly regarded specialist guidance from staff such as a learning mentor and a play therapist. All staff know pupils very well so they notice when additional help is needed. Pupils are also well aware that the headteacher knows all of their names. Responding to the pupils' social and emotional needs has a high priority in the school. Data on pupils' development are used on a day-to-day basis to assess progress, and parents are kept well informed. The school's assessment, tracking and intervention arrangements are very important processes that help pupils towards such excellent progress.

The school's mission is at the very core of the school - 'we aim for excellence with God at the centre of what we think, do and say'. The headteacher is an outstanding manager and leads by example in a calm and highly efficient manner, strongly supported by very effective governors. Partnership with external groups, including parish clergy, is strong. Evaluation of what is taking place is rigorous and accurate. Immediate action is taken on issues identified. Very well constructed, up-to-date policies, including those for safeguarding pupils, ensure that all necessary procedures are followed. Targets are challenging and met. Administration is extremely efficient and effective. The few issues identified at the time of the last inspection have been resolved, and excellent progress has been made, maintaining areas of strength and improving others to match the best. The school has excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make excellent progress in the Foundation Stage. A significant number of children start school with well below the expected levels in personal, social and emotional development, communication language and literacy, and mathematical development. In contrast, most leave the Reception class with a secure knowledge and understanding of all areas of early years learning, ready to embark upon the Year 1 curriculum. Pupils for whom English is an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive substantial, highly effective support from their class teaching staff and additional colleagues. Teaching and support staff for the Nursery and Reception classes work together very closely, ensuring a high quality curriculum and detailed, informative assessment. The very good indoor and outdoor facilities are shared and used to maximum benefit for all. Structured play is at the heart of what takes place. Some of the teaching is of the very highest standard. In a Reception class where children were learning about and discussing different animals and their homes, such as the squirrel in its drey, the challenge was high, the response of the children exceptional and their behaviour outstanding. The excellent leadership of the Foundation Stage is exceptionally knowledgeable and pragmatic. As in all areas of the school, structure, routines and a calm approach are the basis of success.

What the school should do to improve further

- Aim to achieve consistency in the management of support staff in classrooms, making even better use of their time

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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
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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 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	2
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	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

09 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pope John RC School, London, W12 7QR

Thank you very much for talking with me during my visit to your school and for being so helpful. I really enjoyed the time I spent with you.

You told me how very happy you are at school and I can see why. Your school is outstanding. Many of you come into the school struggling with English but you make excellent progress. By the time you leave, your work in English, mathematics and science is of a much higher standard than in many other schools. You are very confident in yourselves, you speak and listen very well and are very good at doing mathematics problems. I thought the way you all joined in doing number problems during the assembly I attended was excellent. You behave very well indeed, look after one another and get on together so well. You also try to help disadvantaged people in the community in lots of ways. You know how important it is to live healthy lives, eating properly and taking part in sport. It was great to see how sensibly you all sit together with the staff, eating the excellent school food at lunch time. You are very well prepared for your secondary schools by the end of Year 6.

Teachers are very good at helping you learn, making really interesting use of the projectors in each classroom. Staff make sure that work is not too easy or too difficult, but just right. Just occasionally, the extra support from adults in the classroom does not keep you working at your usual, excellent rate. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that everyone works together all the time to help you learn. You have the opportunity to learn Italian, as well as all the usual subjects, and to take part in a very wide range of clubs and activities. Almost all of you attend one or more activity. All the staff care greatly about you and check very carefully that you are doing as well as you can. Lots of support is provided if you have problems.

Your headteacher is excellent at her job and she wants you all to be highly successful. She expects the school to be calm and for staff and pupils to show respect for each other, and this happens all the time. I know you will all continue to work together to make the school even better.

Yours sincerely

Peter McGregor

Lead Inspector