

St Cuthbert with St Matthias CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100498
Local Authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	307407
Inspection date	27 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Joan Gould
Headteacher	Ms Ilona Buttinger (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Warwick Road Earls Court London SW5 9UE
Telephone number	020 7373 8225
Fax number	020 7460 0424

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and particularly investigated the provision for children in the Foundation Stage, school leaders' monitoring of provision and standards, and the school's efforts to improve attendance. The inspector met with pupils, and some of the staff and governors. Parts of some lessons were observed, parents' questionnaires and a sample of pupils' work were examined and school information, including self-evaluation, was scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected 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

This is an average size school, but in some year groups there are twice as many boys as girls. Pupils come from a wide range of different minority ethnic groups and almost 90% are learning English as an additional language. Around 15% join the school as refugees. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but the number with a statement of special educational needs is high. Mobility is exceptionally high, with a great many pupils moving to and from the school partway through their primary education. The school has been designated as a Children's Centre, reflecting the high level of needs within the community that the school serves. The Centre is due to open in November 2008. The deputy headteacher was appointed as acting headteacher in September 2007. A new headteacher has been appointed from September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Those children who join in the Foundation Stage get off to an excellent start. They, and the many who join partway through their primary education, achieve well through their time in school. Although many need extra help with their English, pupils succeed in attaining average standards by the end of Year 6. The good progress made by pupils of all abilities and backgrounds stands them in good stead when they move on to secondary school.

St Cuthbert's is well run. School leaders have coped very well with the staff and leadership changes. The school has continued to improve, and the acting headteacher and governors have not allowed the preparation and construction works for the Children's Centre to distract them from maintaining and building on the good quality of education enjoyed by the pupils and greatly appreciated by the parents. As a pleased parent commented, 'My son has progressed so much since he started at St Cuthbert's.'

Pupils do well because they benefit from good teaching. Teachers get on well with their pupils and they work in close partnership with often several other adults in each classroom to ensure carefully tailored support is provided for every pupil who needs it because of learning or language difficulties. Displays make the classrooms stimulating environments that celebrate pupils' work and encourage them to do well. Teachers also give very good encouragement to pupils through their marking, which is detailed and, as the pupils explain, 'Shows us what we need to do better'. Teachers are particularly effective in ensuring that pupils are interested, attentive and engaged. They manage behaviour well, so that even those pupils who join the school with troubled backgrounds and who initially have difficulty in controlling their behaviour, learn to settle into the school's orderly routines. The good curriculum also contributes to pupils' enthusiasm for learning because the range of different topics helps to make learning fun. The school's slew of awards, including ICT Mark (for information and communication technology), Activemark, Artsmark Gold and the Environment Award, attest to the richness of the curriculum that the school provides. Pupils in Year 6 have responded especially well to the opportunity they have had this year to learn Spanish, and their work in this new-to-them language is of a high standard. The opportunity that all the pupils had to go on an exchange visit to Saragossa, funded by the British Council, added an extra spur to their learning. The curriculum is good rather than outstanding because the coverage of history and geography has been relatively thin in some classes. Sometimes these subjects are taught with an over-reliance on worksheets that are insufficiently matched to pupils' often widely different abilities.

Pupils' personal development is good and pupils greatly enjoy school. They feel safe because of the excellent arrangements for their care, guidance and support, making very good use of specialists from outside agencies. A notable feature of provision in this school is that it is very precisely matched to each individual pupil's specific needs. For some, this means catering for quite complex learning and language difficulties. Pupils have a good understanding of the need for exercise and a healthy diet, and they point to the pupil-run 'snack shack' as one of the ways they get their 'five-a-day' fruit and vegetables. Pupils are proud of the responsibilities they take on as helpers and, for example, as school councillors. They also take a pride in the work they do to raise funds for a variety of different charities. They value the cosmopolitan mix of cultures within the school. One of the features that stands out about St Cuthbert's is the way children from different backgrounds mix, work, play and get on well with each other. They sometimes even help as translators when newcomers arrive speaking a tongue unfamiliar to the staff. Throughout the school, pupils are familiar with and follow the 'four Cs' of 'courtesy,

cooperation, common sense and consideration'. Pupils' attendance, however, is below average. This is largely due to holidays in term-time, including a large number due to religious observance among the many pupils of non-Christian faith. The school works hard to chase up unexplained absences, but it does not do as much as it could to promote and reward good attendance.

Based on their careful monitoring, the acting headteacher, leadership team and governors have a sharply accurate picture of the school's many strengths and of those areas which they would like to see improved. This, and the rising trend in standards since the last inspection, show the school's good capacity for continued improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

'My son has blossomed during the time he has spent in the Nursery. He talks at home about his learning and experiences. He enjoys coming to St Cuthbert's.' This account from a parent sums up the views of many whose children attend the Nursery and Reception classes. Children join the school with skills and abilities that are very low for their ages. The excellent provision, with lively teaching that motivates them to learn and achieve, helps them to make outstanding progress so that, by the end of the Reception Year, standards are broadly average. Children do especially well because they are encouraged increasingly to think for themselves and to begin to evaluate and tell the staff how well they think they are doing. The Foundation Stage is generally well-equipped, although the outside play area and its equipment is looking a little shabby. It has been identified by school leaders and governors as a priority for improvement works once the Children's Centre is complete.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve attendance by exploring ways of better promoting and rewarding good attendance.
- Ensure that history and geography are covered fully in all classes and that work in these and other subjects is more closely matched to pupils' different capabilities.

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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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	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	1
The attendance of learners	3
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?	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

09 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Cuthbert with St Matthias CofE Primary School, London, SW5 9UE

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to visit your school. I had a really good day at St Cuthbert's, and you were all very helpful. Several of you told me how proud you are of your school. You are right to be. It is a good school. It is well run and it is helping you to make good progress. That is true for those of you who spend all your time at the school and for those who join the school during Years 1 to 6. You do well because the teaching is good, you are given activities to do that help you learn because they are interesting and fun. Another important reason is that very good extra help is given to those who need it, including those just beginning to learn English. The children in the Nursery and Reception Years make fantastic progress.

The school takes excellent care of you, and many of you told me that you feel safe and very happy at school. It was very good to see how well behaved almost all of you are and how well you all get on with each other. You certainly all do your best to achieve the school's 'four Cs'. It sounds like the 'snack shack' is quite a success, so I hope you'll keep up your healthy diet.

I was disappointed that attendance has not improved. The school works hard to chase your parents up when you miss school but I have asked them to look at ways of rewarding you for coming to school regularly and on time. I know how keen you are to earn house points, so maybe points and certificates will help to improve attendance. When you are not at school, you miss out on all the exciting things going on. The other thing I have asked the school to do is to make sure you learn enough history and geography in every class and that in these and other subjects you are not all given the same work to do. Some of the work I looked at from earlier this year showed that when you all had the same sheets to fill in, the work was too easy for some of you and too hard for others.

Good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward

Lead Inspector