

St John's Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100841
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	307506
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Madeleine Gerard

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	182
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Robert Ellis
Headteacher	Ms Janice Babb
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2003
School address	St Elmo's Road London SE16 6SD
Telephone number	020 7252 1859
Fax number	020 7237 3877

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school with a Nursery. Pupils come from a variety of different backgrounds. The largest groups are White British, Black British and other White backgrounds. A quarter of the pupils are learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is twice the national average although the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has Healthy School and Bronze Ecoschool status, and the Activemark for Physical Education. Staff turnover has been high over the past year. The headteacher joined the school in January 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St John's RC Primary is a satisfactory school where pupils are happy and develop good personal skills. The headteacher, leaders and governors have had success in creating a friendly and welcoming environment where pupils of all backgrounds grow in self confidence and self esteem. Behaviour is good in class and around the school. Relationships within the school community are good. Teachers manage behaviour well which helps pupils to feel safe and contributes to pupils' good social and emotional development. Pupils make a good contribution to school life and to the local community. Parents are confident that their children enjoy school. One parent commented, 'My children are happy and want to go to school every day'.

Pupils' attainment in their key literacy and numeracy skills prepares them satisfactorily for the next stage in their education. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 have been broadly average over recent years. Although there was a dip in standards in 2007, particularly in English, the school has successfully addressed this by monitoring pupils' progress more carefully, increasing staff knowledge of how literacy skills develop and targeting support where it is most needed. Pupils' current work and the school's own data show that more pupils are on course to reach the levels expected for their age. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' average starting points.

However, progress is inconsistent as pupils move through the school because the quality of teaching varies significantly. Work is not always well matched to the specific learning needs of all pupils. For pupils learning English as an additional language, and the few identified with learning difficulties, this is less of a problem because they receive good targeted support outside the classroom. However, more able pupils do not always make the progress they should because they are not set challenging enough work, particularly in literacy. The quality of marking is also uneven. It does not always set out what pupils should do to improve their work. Some pupils know and understand their targets but others do not. These inconsistencies mean care guidance and support are satisfactory despite the school's strong pastoral care.

The headteacher has made a significant impact since starting in January 2008 and has taken effective steps to reverse the drop in standards which show the school's satisfactory capacity to improve. The effect of this action has been hampered partly by changes in staff. Some subject leaders have only recently been appointed and senior and middle leaders and governors are not yet fully part of the monitoring process. Consequently, the quality of teaching is not scrutinised regularly enough to identify areas for further improvement quickly in order to eliminate the inconsistencies, raise standards further and meet challenging targets. There is more to do to make sure tracking data is used consistently well to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. In the Foundation Stage, adults know children well and daily records are very detailed. However, assessment systems are not yet fully in place to ensure that children's progress is checked systematically across the Foundation Stage to ensure they make good progress. Parents praise the school and some made a point of writing to express their confidence in the new headteacher.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children join the Nursery with a range of skills and capabilities but generally they are at the expected level for their age. They

settle quickly due to the caring support and happy working relationships. The good focus on helping children to work successfully with others supports their personal and social development. There are good opportunities for children to select tasks for themselves. However, these are not always balanced with tasks focusing on the specific needs of the children and there is room for greater challenge for those who find learning easy, especially in literacy and numeracy. The school has taken steps to enhance the outdoor areas which helps physical development to grow although there is limited cover to allow outdoor activities when the weather is bad.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise the standards they attain by ensuring that teaching and learning are consistently good.
- Ensure the information gained from tracking pupils' progress, assessing and marking is used consistently to set suitably challenging work and to make clear to pupils what the next steps are in their learning.
- Involve leaders at all levels and governors in monitoring the quality of provision.

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

Achievement is satisfactory and standards by the end of Year 6 are broadly average. In 2007, standards at the end of Year 2 were below average but current Year 2 pupils are attaining levels close to the national average, particularly in reading and writing. In the 2007 national tests at the end of Year 6, results were average in mathematics and science but below average in English. At the time of inspection, results from the 2008 national tests were not available to inspectors but pupils' current work and the school's own data show that more pupils are working at the expected level in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties, including those who find literacy difficult and those with delayed speech and language make similar progress to others because of the good, targeted support they receive individually and in small groups. The same is true for those who are learning English as an additional language. However, more able pupils are not consistently set work that is sufficiently challenging and as a result they do not always make as much progress as they should.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are polite, well-mannered and show a good awareness of each other and those who are less fortunate. The feelings of one pupil echoed that of many when he said, 'This school is safe and heart-warming - people cheer you up'. Links with the local church and opportunities to take on responsibility in school, for example through the school council, help pupils to think carefully about spirituality and to develop good social skills. Older pupils help younger children with their reading and mathematics, and the Energy Team takes their role in turning off unnecessary lights and unused electrical equipment very seriously. Pupils are proud of their work with the local community as an Eco-school, which has recently been rewarded with a local authority prize. In Year 4, pupils are sewing cross-stitch welcome signs in many of the languages spoken within the school community, which reflects pupils' good cultural development. 'We

are all the same here', said one pupil. They talk knowledgeably about the importance of healthy lifestyles and many pupils walk or cycle to school. Attendance is average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils are eager to learn and co-operate well with each other, which develops teamwork and personal skills. Teachers plan lessons with varied activities but planning does not always match the needs of all the pupils and ensure they make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported in targeted additional sessions tailored to meet their needs. In some classes, pupils are encouraged to assess how well they are making progress but this is inconsistent and teachers do not always make clear what pupils should be learning. Marking is not always used to show pupils clearly the next steps in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets statutory requirements. Pupils develop their computing skills across a range of subjects. Other highlights include French for pupils in Years 3 and 4 and recorder lessons for pupils in Years 4 and 5. However, there are few links between subjects, and opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy through work in other subjects are limited. Pupils enjoy visits to local places of interest and there is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular clubs on offer including sport and computing. Specialist teachers from a local secondary school contribute well to the teaching of sports. This develops pupils' positive attitudes to keeping fit and healthy as well as supporting pupils in the transfer to secondary school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good and is centred on staff knowing pupils well. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and they feel secure at school because they are confident that adults will support them should any problems occur. One pupil said of the school, 'It's a really nice place to be'. Systems for safeguarding pupils' well-being, safety and health are rigorous and all members of staff are well trained. Arrangements for supporting pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language are effective, well managed and inclusive. This enables these pupils to make satisfactory progress. Vulnerable pupils are well supported as the school places strong emphasis on reflection and caring for others. Academic guidance is satisfactory. There are systems to monitor pupils' progress although the information gathered is not used sufficiently to plan appropriately challenging tasks in all lessons. While some pupils are clear about their individual targets, and what they need to do next to move to the next level in their work, this is inconsistent. Marking in pupils' books does not always give sufficient guidance on how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides good leadership and has a clear vision for the school. Monitoring of the quality of provision ensures the school has an accurate view of its strengths and where developments are needed. However, it does not involve all leaders and managers in evaluating the quality and consistency of teaching and learning in order to bring about swift improvements. Although new systems are in place to check how well pupils are making progress, information from assessments is not used consistently throughout the school to ensure that all pupils are suitably challenged in their work so that they make good progress. Governors are very committed to the school. They share the headteachers' vision for an inclusive school where the pupils are at the heart of all the school's work but they have not held the school to account enough on achievement and standards.

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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?	3
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	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	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?	3

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	3
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

04 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Roman Catholic Primary School, London, SE16 6SD

Thank you for the warm and friendly welcome you gave us and for helping us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we found. St John's RC Primary is a satisfactory school and these are its strengths.

- You behave well and we know you enjoy being at school because you and your parents told us this.
- You are keen to learn and get on well with each other.
- You know how important it is to keep fit and healthy.
- You are thoughtful about other people's needs and are good at carrying out responsibilities.
- You support the school and local community well. We were particularly impressed by your Energy Team who save energy by turning off lights and electrical equipment at lunch time.
- Your school council is making sure that your views are heard.
- You told us that the adults look after you well and make you feel safe at school.
- Your new headteacher and other staff are working hard to make the school even better.

Although your progress is satisfactory, we have asked the school to speed this up so that you reach higher standards in your work. We have also asked the school to make sure that the teaching is always closely matched to your needs and that you are given clear guidance about how to make your work better. You can help with this by telling your teachers if you find the work too easy. We noticed that some of you get on better in some classes than in others so we have asked all the leaders to help your headteacher to check the teaching more often so that all of you learn well. You and your parents can also help by making sure that you attend school regularly and on time.

Yours sincerely

Madeleine Gerard

Lead Inspector