

St Agnes RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100949
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	307533
Inspection date	7 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs P Ing
Headteacher	Mrs C Craddock (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2004
School address	Rainhill Way Bow London E3 3ER
Telephone number	020 8980 3076
Fax number	020 8983 1770

Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: what the school is doing to raise the achievement of girls; the impact the curriculum is having on learning; the effectiveness of subject leaders and governors in monitoring the work of the school. The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and parents' questionnaires. Discussions with staff, a governor and pupils also contributed to the judgements. 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 this report.

Description of the school

This average sized school with a Nursery lies in the inner city. Three fifths of pupils come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest being Black African. Just over a fifth of pupils speak an additional language to English, well above average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is high. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. Many of these have moderate learning difficulties. The school has awards for promoting basic skills and physical education. It has partnerships with local schools to promote community cohesion and to enhance aspects of the curriculum.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school has many strengths. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have moved the school forward this year through improving pupils' achievement in writing. They have also introduced a new scheme for pupils' social and emotional development, which is having a very positive impact on relationships. Parents overwhelmingly support the work of the school. One said, 'The staff are great to the children and are also there for the parents/carers no matter what the problem.' Pupils attain above average standards by the end of Year 6 from starting points that are below national expectations in the Nursery. This is due to good teaching and an imaginative curriculum that involves pupils well in their learning.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and are clear about what they want pupils to learn. They make lessons fun by actively involving pupils and maintaining a brisk pace. A pupil recalled, 'We get a chance to see what happens', when describing experiments in science. All pupils are included well in the activities. Teachers are careful to make sure girls and pupils with moderate learning difficulties play a full part in proceedings, especially when summing up the lesson at the end. Year 4 pupils were very excited about making models of the arm in design and technology, linked to their science work. They used elastic and hinges to demonstrate how the arm flexes, and video to talk about the challenges the task posed. While there is some good artwork on display in the corridors, the classrooms do not celebrate much of the pupils' work, especially their writing. Most of the wall space is given over to instructional material.

Pupils make good progress throughout the school in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils develop early literacy and numeracy skills well in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, catching up with their peers nationally, so that by the end of Year 2 standards are only a little below average. They continue to achieve well in Years 3 to 6. A new approach to teaching writing, with more opportunities for extended work, has brought about rapid improvements for all pupils. They are involved in assessing the quality of their own work and are much more aware of how they can do better. Photos of children around the school talking about their learning challenge stereotypes and encourage girls to take more of an interest in mathematics, and boys to enjoy writing. In 2007, girls did not do so well as boys, mainly because more girls had learning difficulties. This is not the situation this year, with all pupils achieving equally well. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties receive good support from teaching assistants so that they mainly progress well.

The personal development and well-being of pupils and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they go out of their way to support one another. The older pupils take good care of the younger ones, both informally and as reading partners and playground friends. The school council plays an important role in the life of the school. School council members made a fabulous film to encourage pupils to remember to wash their hands, featuring Germ and Soapaman! Pupils take plenty of exercise, including daily keep-fit in the playground. They take part in a wide array of sports including fencing, lacrosse and golf. Pupils say they feel safe at school and have an adult to turn to if they have a problem. They value the contribution the school's mentor makes to their well-being. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and attendance is above average. One pupil said, 'There's always something fun to do in literacy and maths.' The excellent enrichment within the good curriculum adds to their pleasure, especially the many trips they go on. Pupils have visited the British Museum, Colchester Castle and a local zoo as part of their studies. Other activities include Spanish, guitar lessons and Salsa dancing. They also take part in the school's many clubs. They

raise large amounts for local charities, writing persuasive letters to local businesses to help them. Pupils take part in church and parish services and events. They hold exchanges with schools of a contrasting character, and are pen pals with a school in California. Pupils leave the school as confident learners with a good set of basic skills and are ready for their move to secondary school.

The curriculum contributes well to pupils' learning and their outstanding personal development. There are good links across subjects and a focus on moral and social issues make pupils more aware of their role in the community. The school has spacious and mature grounds, which are rather overgrown. It is planning to develop these so that pupils can benefit from making full use of them. The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are good. There is a strong Christian ethos that unites staff, pupils and parents in shared values. A governor said the family feel is 'like a village school.' Good links with outside agencies help to support vulnerable pupils and those with moderate learning difficulties. The quality of individual education plans is variable, with some having targets and evaluations that are not specific enough. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) does not formally meet with individual class teachers to review these plans and discuss the progress of their pupils over time. Pupils know their targets for improvement in literacy and numeracy, and marking shows them the next steps in their learning.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The acting headteacher and acting deputy head have enabled the school to improve over the past year, and have strengthened an effective and highly committed staff team. They have involved all staff and governors in evaluating the work of the school and in drawing up strategic plans. Subject leaders are enthusiastic and have a generally good grasp of their areas, although they have few opportunities to observe lessons to support their colleagues. As a result, action plans are inconsistent, with some targets lacking sufficient detail to make a real impact on the subject. Governors support the school enthusiastically, and come in more often than at the time of the last inspection to monitor its work. They do not currently have an agreed format for reporting their observations to the rest of the governing body. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and is well placed to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle quickly into the Nursery and Reception classes, enjoying the safe environment. They have plenty of interesting activities to engage them, and make good progress in developing their skills. Effective use is made of the outdoor areas to promote children's learning. Long-term planning takes account of the six areas of learning, but activities are not explicitly linked to them in weekly plans. There is a good mixture of child-initiated and adult-led tasks. The teaching is good, with staff working together well as a team. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well, and staff keep careful records of the children's progress. Building work has begun to increase the size of the Reception class, which is rather small.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable teachers to meet with the SENCO at regular intervals to review the quality of individual education plans and discuss pupils' progress.
- Give more opportunities for subject leaders to monitor teaching and learning so that all action plans have clear targets for improvement.

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

Achievement and standards

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

19 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Agnes RC Primary School, London, E3 3ER

Thank you very much for making me so welcome at your school. I did enjoy my visit. Yours is a good school with many strengths. Here are some of them.

- You make good progress in your learning so that standards are above average.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you care for one another extremely well.
- You have an outstanding understanding of how to live healthily.
- You find lessons fun and really enjoy school.
- There are plenty of exciting things for you to do both in school and on visits and in clubs.
- The school looks after you well and shows you how to improve your work.
- The acting headteacher and acting deputy head lead the school well.

It would be a good idea for teachers to meet together to talk about how those of you who sometimes find work difficult are getting on. It is important that everybody is clear what help you need. I also think it would be helpful for subject leaders to see what is going on in different classrooms so that they can draw up detailed plans to make their subjects even better. I am sure they would find it useful to hear from you what you like doing best and why.

Thank you once again for all your help. My best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mr N Butt

Lead Inspector