

Westminster Cathedral RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101146
Local Authority	Westminster
Inspection number	307603
Inspection dates	14–15 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Sue Rogers

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	191
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Fardon
Headteacher	Mr J M Hartnett
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2004
School address	Bessborough Place London SW1V 3SE
Telephone number	020 7641 5915
Fax number	020 7641 6384

Age group	5-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Westminster Cathedral is an average sized primary school, which serves an urban area. The number of pupils who take free school meals is above average. This is a diverse multicultural community and the number of pupils of minority ethnic origin is therefore much higher than the national average. Nearly a third of the school have European backgrounds. Almost a half of the pupils are new to English when they arrive.

The school holds the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Westminster Cathedral is a good school where pupils make good progress in their work and their personal development is excellent. When asked what they think pupils typically say, 'School is fun. I can't think of anything bad to say about it.' Parents overwhelmingly share their children's positive views. The headteacher is well established and a strong leader and has secured the confidence of the community. One parent exemplified the views of others by stating, 'Westminster is a fantastic school, where both my children have received a wonderful education.'

Children enter the school with a very wide spread of abilities compared to those normally expected of three and four year olds. Taken as a whole, their skills and knowledge at this time are below expectations, because so many are new to English or have difficulties with literacy. They make good progress overall to reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave Year 6. Pupils' progress is outstanding at times, but is a little variable from year to year because teaching, although good overall, is not entirely consistent. Results in different subjects also vary slightly. In 2007 English was much better than mathematics and science. The school recognises that pupils are strong on knowledge in the latter two subjects, but are slightly weaker in problem solving and reasoning skills and this affects their achievement.

Teaching is good. Teachers are well organised and work hard to make the curriculum interesting and inclusive. They track pupils' progress effectively, using well-analysed assessment data. This helps teachers plan interventions to ensure that pupils who struggle with English make progress that is equally as good as that of their classmates. On occasion, however, teachers do not build in enough challenge for more able pupils. Academic guidance for learners is satisfactory. There are pockets of good practice, but marking and individual target setting are inconsistent. As a result, pupils are not always clear enough about what they have to do to improve.

Pastoral care for pupils is outstanding, school relationships are excellent and a sense of community pervades the school. Pupils behave exceptionally well and are confident, very polite, and considerate of others. Their contribution to the community is excellent. They work very hard to support charities and are proud of the work of their school council. For example, the council plays a significant part in making sure pupils enjoy school, by organising games and competitions. Pupils feel very safe and their knowledge about staying healthy is good. Assemblies develop a very positive reflective atmosphere and pupils' excellent social skills contribute to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The headteacher works very well with his deputy headteacher. They and subject leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Leaders monitor teaching regularly, but identified areas for development are not always followed up systematically enough to ensure that teaching is consistent and challenging. The school has excellent partnerships with others. Strong links with secondary schools, for instance, have greatly helped curriculum development. The governing body provides very good challenge and support for the school and has been active in supporting improvement. Pupils' progress has accelerated since the last inspection, because of leaders' continuing focus on standards, and the school therefore has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Reception class. They quickly become used to the staff's high expectations for their behaviour and, as a result, their personal development is very good. The teacher works very hard to provide exciting activities that develop speaking and listening, such as dressing up in the right clothes to go to the beach or the jungle. Good organisation, careful explanations and pictures help those who are new to English to understand what is wanted. Consequently, pupils make good progress in all areas of their learning. By the time they reach Year 1 they are working in line with national expectations in most of these areas. However, they are still below average in writing and mathematics. The teacher rightly plans to introduce more practical mathematical activities to improve the children's skills in calculating. Staff keep very good assessment records that the children are very keen to take home to demonstrate what they have learned.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers always provide enough challenge for more able pupils by improving the rigour of the monitoring of teaching.
- Improve pupils' ability to problem solve and reason logically.
- Make sure that pupils are always clear about what they have to do to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Learners' progress reflects the teaching and can vary from satisfactory to outstanding as pupils move through the school. Test results at the end of Year 6 are variable depending on the proportion of pupils who need support with English. These pupils make good progress compared to national averages, because of well-managed additional support. However, the school acknowledges that they will need even more support with the structure of their writing and with their problem solving skills if they are to make consistently fast progress. The school has good assessment information for all other subjects of the curriculum and this shows that pupils make good progress, and are working, on average, at levels that are above national expectations in every subject in the curriculum this is confirmed by displays of good work on the classroom walls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils say, 'The teachers are really understanding.' This shows they are very confident that staff are there to talk to if they have a personal problem and that they will help them if they do not understand their work. By the time they reach Year 6 pupils have very mature attitudes. They collaborate very well and go out of their way to help each other. They play together extremely harmoniously because pupils enjoy taking responsibility as play leaders. They also benefit from the imaginative use of the playground, which is divided into areas such as a creative zone. The only criticism that the pupils have is that the playground is a little too small and they are correct in thinking that this hampers their freedom to move energetically at times. All in all, learners are very enthusiastic about school. Attendance is above average, compared to similar schools, and is improving, thanks to the continued efforts of the staff. The pupils enjoy fund raising for various good causes such as providing fishing boats for the tribespeople of

Lake Turkana. Pupils' excellent social skills and their good progress in all subjects mean that they are well prepared for the next stages in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching varies from outstanding to satisfactory. The best lessons are lively and teachers' subject knowledge is good. Teachers make good links between subjects. For example, pupils in one lesson were writing part of a story that involved bullying and so developing their social and language skills simultaneously. Pupils' behaviour is very well managed and pupils have great respect for their teachers. Teaching assistants are very well deployed to ensure that all pupils receive optimum support. Pupils use an effective 'traffic light' system to signal to the teacher if they do not understand the task, and teachers' explanations are clear and helpful. Teachers generally make good use of assessment information to ensure that pupils' work is well matched to their abilities. However, on occasion, more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school works hard to adapt the curriculum and ensure it is inclusive. For example, teachers plan helpful interventions when pupils fall behind average expectations for their age. There are strong links with Spain and Portugal that support the teaching of Spanish and the understanding of culture in both of these countries. All pupils benefit from this, but Spanish-speaking pupils really enjoy developing their mother tongue and taking the opportunity to support others. There is a good balance of subjects in the curriculum, and the teaching of music and information and communication technology (ICT) is strong. However, the school is correctly continuing to develop links between subjects. There is a good range of clubs and visitors to school but the range of visits in local area has become more limited over recent years. This is because the school is, quite rightly, concerned about the safety of the pupils on public transport. However, not enough has been done to explore other options, such as walking.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are very well cared for. They feel confident that school is a safe place to be because relationships are so strong. All required safeguarding is in place. Pupils are well supported through very strong links with outside agencies. Those who have individual education plans make good progress because their needs are very clearly identified. Academic guidance is satisfactory but practice varies across the school. All pupils have targets, to help them improve their work and some have very good individual development plans stuck onto their desks to remind them what to do. As a result some pupils are clear about what they have to do to improve in the long term. However, other pupils say that their targets are referred to less frequently. Marking and the quality of day-to-day feedback is also variable.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is a calm, well-organised presence in the school, maintaining its place at the heart of the community. He and other senior leaders know their school very well. However, action planning and monitoring procedures are not always written in enough specific detail to ensure that improvements can be measured clearly. As a result, there has been some variation in teaching that is reflected in pupils' progress. Nevertheless, leaders set challenging targets and have maintained high standards in both academic work and pupils' personal development. Consequently, pupils' progress continues to accelerate.

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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	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	2
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

01 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westminster Cathedral RC Primary School, London, SW1V 3SE

On behalf of your inspectors, I would like to thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We were delighted to see how polite and helpful you are. Special thanks to those of you who gave up some of your lunch break to talk to us.

We were very pleased to hear how much you like school. We agree with you that Westminster Cathedral Primary is a good school. You make good progress in your work to reach above average standards in your tests when you leave in Year 6. Your personal development is outstanding. It was really good to see how well you get on with each other and how you look after each other. You are very well cared for and you told us that you feel very safe. Your behaviour is excellent and you all work very hard.

You were keen to tell us how good the teachers are at helping you when you do not understand. You said that your lessons were interesting and you are right. The head and your teachers work very hard. However, we think that occasionally lessons are a little too easy for some of you. We have asked the teachers to make sure that all your work is challenging. We also think that it would be helpful for your mathematics and science if you did more problem solving and reasoning. Some of you know your targets better than others and get more information about what you need to do to improve. We have asked your teachers to try to make sure that you all get good information that helps you know what you need to focus on next.

Make sure that you all keep on working as hard as you do now!

Yours sincerely

Sue Rogers

Lead Inspector