

# Convent of Jesus and Mary RC Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101544
<b>Local Authority</b>	Brent
<b>Inspection number</b>	307730
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sheila Nolan

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	280
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Maria De Lourdes Fernandes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Teresa O'Higgins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 November 2004
<b>School address</b>	21 Park Avenue London NW2 5AN
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8459 5890
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8451 9499

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school serves a community that is socially, economically and culturally very diverse. Three quarters of the school population, much higher than is typical nationally, is from a wide range of ethnic heritages. Many begin school with little knowledge of English. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is above the national average but that of pupils who have specific learning or behavioural difficulties is lower than average. Increasing numbers of children join or leave the school at other than standard times, mainly because of recent immigration patterns in the area. The school has achieved the Sportsmark and Healthy School awards.

## 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 and improving school. It has rightly gained the confidence and support of the majority of parents. 'The work that teachers and teaching assistants do with the children is fabulous' noted one parent. Another wrote that teachers are 'creative, warm and really caring about the children'. Pupils, too, are enthusiastic about what the school offers and give it 'top marks'. All agree that the school lives up to its Christian aims and creates a harmonious community.

A real strength is the way the school welcomes the many newcomers that join its ranks throughout the school year. Pupils thrive in its friendly, safe environment. This well-focused care, guidance and support result in good personal development for all pupils. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good. Pupils value their racial and cultural diversity, celebrating their many different traditions within a Christian community. The overwhelming majority of pupils enjoy school, behave well, and are keen to attend regularly. However, many families face circumstances that disrupt children's education through extended periods overseas and this has a negative impact on attendance figures. Most pupils have a good understanding of healthy eating and are proud of their roles as chefs at the lunchtime salad bar. They participate enthusiastically in physical activities at break and after school. Golfing is a clear favourite! Many make a difference to others through 'friendship buddies', through gifts for children in Romania, and through fund raising for charities.

Children are prepared well for their future education and economic well-being. From generally below average, and sometimes well below average starting points, they achieve well. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are at least average and in most years above average. The school rightly recognises that some able pupils do not always achieve as highly as they should, particularly in mathematics and writing. Pupils with specific learning difficulties achieve well as do those with little or no English when they join the school because of consistently good teaching and learning. Excellent support from teaching assistants, the stimulating use of information and communications technology (ICT) and other exciting resources engages children well in learning. The outstanding curriculum is well-planned so that children can apply their learning in practical situations. Teachers check pupils' progress regularly and provide careful guidance on how to improve both class and homework.

Leadership and management are good. The significant improvements since the last inspection demonstrate clearly the school's strong capacity to improve further. The curriculum in the Reception Year is now good. Pupils with specific learning and behavioural needs are involved effectively in setting and reviewing their targets. Pupils' progress across the curriculum is checked regularly and thoroughly. Above all, the school has sustained the pupils' good progress over several years and improved attendance and punctuality.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with standards that are lower than those expected for their ages. Many have little English. They develop positive attitudes to learning and high levels of social skills because of very effective methods to induct them into school life. A strong focus on speaking and listening helps all children to achieve well. Teachers and teaching assistants collaborate successfully to provide a stimulating curriculum and environment, both indoors and

out, that encourages children to develop independence. For example, in the Nursery, the 'flower project' with its associated role-play, extends children in all aspects of learning but strengthens their knowledge and understanding of the world exceptionally well. Children make good progress in all areas of learning because of good teaching and thorough checks on their learning. Standards are just below average at the end of the Reception Year.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Intensify even further the school's efforts to promote good attendance.
- Ensure that all able pupils achieve as highly as possible, particularly in mathematics and writing.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are above average in most year groups, and overall, pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Pupils' progress has been good over several years and the school's records demonstrate that the trend is set to continue in 2008. Rigorous checks on pupils' performance indicate that attainment in the current Year 2 is slightly lower because a high proportion of pupils with little knowledge of English joined the school during this academic year.

Significant numbers of pupils join the school at the start of Year 1. Many are at the early stages of learning English. The latter make particularly fast progress in their communication skills, learning to use English effectively. All groups of pupils achieve well, but in some year groups able pupils could reach even higher levels in writing and mathematics. Pupils with behavioural difficulties make good progress in their social skills as do the few with severe delays in learning. They achieve as well as they can because of consistently good teaching, well tailored to their needs.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is good. This is evident in their enjoyment of and positive attitudes towards school. Pupils report that they feel safe and that adults are always there to help. Pupils know about healthy lifestyles and participate well in physical activities. Their understanding of healthy eating is good and well supported by the efforts of the school canteen. They respond well to opportunities to share their views on school and other matters through the school council and in lessons. Because of their good progress in basic skills, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils have a good understanding of their own culture and a growing awareness of other cultures because of shared experiences and celebrations of their various traditions. Pupils' spiritual awareness is strong, promoted through assemblies and other elements of the creative curriculum. They behave sensibly in lessons, in the playground and around the school. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility within the school and they use them well. For example, they man the 'friendship stop and bench' at breaks and manage the lunchtime play apparatus. They share their musical and theatrical presentations with local audiences.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Learning and teaching are good. 'Today is a good day to learn something new' captures the school's intentions well. Pupils are motivated to learn because teachers plan interesting and stimulating lessons, often through the use of ICT. Classrooms and corridors are lively and colourful, encouraging children to learn through the displays of their work but also providing the impetus to explore themes and ideas independently. Pupils are mostly well engaged in lessons, particularly where there is enough additional classroom support to help them. A few classes have too little support for the needs of the group. Teaching assistants play a very active part in pupils' learning. They provided indispensable support in the special 'maths fun' events so that children were able to experience a wide range of outdoor practical measuring activities.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

A creative curriculum is at the centre of the school's drive to promote pupils' progress and personal development. Alongside good provision for basic skills, pupils experience stimulating projects that cross subject boundaries. Some, such as the tasks on Brazil, are tailored particularly well to build on the pupils' cultural backgrounds. Work with a visiting artist encourages children to present their scientific findings from their environmental projects in stunning visual displays. The curriculum extends well beyond the classroom and the school day. Besides a wide range of playground activities, there are French and Spanish classes at lunchtimes, after-school sporting and art clubs and regular music and dance opportunities. Celebrations of the annual events of religious calendars contribute very effectively to the pupils' personal development.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Pupils are nurtured well in a secure and supportive environment. Good care both in lessons and around the school keeps children safe and happy. The school works effectively with outside agencies to ensure that the needs of pupils with specific learning and behavioural difficulties and other complex needs are met. All pupils feel valued and staff ensure that those new to the school are fully included in the playground as well as in lessons. Children at the early stages of learning English are supported well because teachers accurately assess their needs. Regular checks on pupils' progress help identify any underachievement and inform remedial programmes. The school does recognise, however, that occasionally some children miss out on helpful feedback on homework. Effective liaison with the junior school means that pupils transfer confidently to the next stage of their education.

## Leadership and management

#### Grade: 2

The headteacher's determined leadership and 'relentless pursuit of perfection' since the last inspection is reflected in the many improvements across the school. She has the full support of the very effective deputy headteacher and together they have not only raised the pupils' academic performance but have also grappled with significant changes to the make-up of the

school's population. Well-targeted training has developed middle managers effectively so that their leadership is mostly good. They are increasingly pro-active in monitoring and evaluating their areas of responsibility. Governors and senior staff work exceptionally closely together in the self-review process. The identification of strengths and areas for improvement is generally accurate, including the recognition that able pupils can do even better than at present.

Outstanding governance over many years has provided much-needed support for essential building work and has helped maintain the school's focus on its Christian ethos. Strong links with external agencies, often through local parishes, have enabled the school to give good support to new arrivals from Central Europe and South America. The school is rightly determined to improve further the attendance of some of these pupils. Although the school makes considerable efforts to keep parents informed of school happenings, a few are concerned about communications, particularly over the organisation of events.

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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 <sup>1</sup> 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?	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	1
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	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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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**

05 June 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Convent of Jesus and Mary RC Infant School, London, NW2 5AN

Thank you very much for your friendly welcome when we inspected your school recently. We really enjoyed your company. We were also very pleased to hear how much you enjoyed school and to see how well you worked in lessons. Some of you seem not to want the day to end so you take part in the many after-school events.

We think you go to a good school that not only helps you to learn successfully, but it also looks after you well. We think it gives you a really good start. We were impressed by your behaviour and the way you work well together. It is a pity that some of you take too much time off school because this hinders the good work your teachers do for you.

There are many things that are special about your school. We would like to single out your teachers and helpers who encourage and support you both in lessons and in the interesting clubs at breaks and after school. You say grown-ups listen to your ideas and they are always willing to listen if you have a problem. It is really good that you help each other through 'buddy friends'. You enjoy the many games opportunities in the playground and know how to choose healthy appetising meals.

Before we left, we talked to your teachers about how the school could do even better. They told us that they will make sure that the most able among you do as well as possible. They will also work even harder to improve your attendance.

We also ask those of you who take time off for holidays and other visits in school time not to do so.

We would like to wish you and your school every success for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Sheila Nolan

Lead Inspector