

St Margaret Clitherow RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101548
Local Authority	Brent
Inspection number	307733
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2008
Reporting inspector	John Horwood

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	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Mary Boyle
Headteacher	Mrs Ewa McSperrin
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2003
School address	Quainton Street London NW10 0BG
Telephone number	020 8450 3631
Fax number	020 8450 3729

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size and very popular primary school. The majority of pupils come from Catholic families and most from the parish of English Martyrs Church in Wembley Park. There is a wide cultural mix from a range of backgrounds including Black African, Eastern European, White British, Caribbean and Asian pupils. About a quarter of pupils have English as an additional language and, when they start in the Nursery, many have little or no knowledge of the English language. A few pupils come from traveller families. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The number of pupils who receive support for their special educational needs is well above average. The school has achieved numerous awards including the Inclusion Quality Mark, Activemark, the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark and 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

This is a school with some outstanding features. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is well supported by an effective leadership team and governing body. The structure of the leadership team has changed to help raise standards and this has had a positive impact in the school. Parents are very appreciative of the high level of care, and the excellent relationships, that enable their children to make good progress. As one parent said, 'A superb leadership team who have total commitment to the achievement and pastoral care of the children'.

Children enter the Nursery with well below expected levels of skill and language but make good progress throughout the school to have close to average standards by the end of Year 6. The number of pupils with English as their second language or with other learning difficulties varies from year to year but is well above average. All groups of pupils achieve well. Those with special educational needs often make exceptional progress because of the high quality support they receive.

The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to raising standards. Classrooms are too small for the number of pupils and this restricts the opportunities for the necessary range of learning activities to take place. This was raised at the last inspection and the school is pursuing it with enthusiasm and determination. This limitation has an impact on the quality of the lessons teachers are able to produce and directly affects progress of pupils and the standards they achieve. The teachers' marking of pupils work is of variable quality because it does not always identify how they should improve. Pupils, however, say that they are always given verbal support. The broad curriculum is supported by an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils' progress is very well monitored and analysed as they progress through the school and this enables support to be given where needed. The school is aware of the need to review the curriculum provision to ensure the most able pupils can make as much progress as they can.

Throughout the school, support provided for the high numbers of pupils with specific needs is outstanding. Those who have difficulty with English are supported by staff and by their peers. Those who need academic support benefit from intervention strategies including individual help in lessons and booster classes. The work with other agencies to support the wellbeing of all pupils is outstanding and parents are fully involved in all review processes.

Staff look after pupils outstandingly well. All adults are good role models and relationships are outstanding. Pupils are polite, friendly, courteous and well behaved. They enjoy coming to school and they feel safe in the building and the playground. They are aware of the need to eat healthily and they participate well in the sporting activities available. They make excellent contributions to both the school and to the wider community. They are outstandingly well prepared to achieve future economic success. Attendance levels are below the national average because many families take extended holidays to visit relatives abroad.

Most of the issues from the previous inspection have been addressed. The leadership team accurately identifies the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Having raised care and welfare of pupils to their outstanding levels and developed a comprehensive assessment and tracking system that is helping to raise standards, the school has shown it has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

All children are making good progress in lessons. Teaching is good with challenging questioning and planning to meet the varying needs of the children. In the Nursery the initial focus is on providing language support to help the children settle and develop their social skills. Ongoing assessment ensures that as they move into and through the Reception class their individual needs are met. Relationships between staff and children are very good and the warm caring approach of the staff impacts well on children's confidence. Activities are linked together which ensures that children learn in relevant and meaningful ways.

Staff know the children well and this is evident in the quality of regular assessment evidence and in planning for their needs. Clear expectations result in children engaging well in activities. There is a good partnership with parents exemplified by the introduction of a period of reflection for pupils following feedback from parents. A variety of school trips enrich and enhance children's learning, for instance, their visit to London Aquarium as part of their story 'the rainbow Fish'. Staff have rightly identified the need to fine-tune the use of data to give them an even clearer picture of areas to be improved and to help them develop role play areas.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable learners to attain higher standards in all subjects by providing a wider range of learning opportunities in lessons.
- Work closely with parents to reduce the amount of holidays taken in term time and the negative effect this has on their academic progress.
- Ensure the marking of pupils work is consistently used to help them understand how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The attainment of pupils in Key Stage 1 has been variable in recent years but recovered in 2007 from a gradual decline and was broadly average. Currently pupils in Years 1 and 2 are making good progress in lessons and standards are broadly average at the end of the key stage. Standards reached by the end of Key Stage 2 have been broadly average for several years but rose sharply in 2007 to be above average in all subjects. The current Year 6 pupils are working at broadly average standards which reflects their lower attainment on entry to Key Stage 2. The progress made by pupils between Year 2 and Year 6 was good in 2007 with pupils having special educational needs making exceptional progress from their lower starting point. There are no significant variations between the performances of any other groups of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding with pupils having very good attitudes to learning, excellent relationships, showing respect and being well mannered in a school where there is a rich cultural diversity. Behaviour in lessons is outstanding ensuring that all pupils can learn in a safe and happy environment. Staff, parents and pupils are unanimous in their view that there are no behaviour issues within the school. The involvement of pupils in the running of the school is significantly higher than might be expected. As well as the effective school council they are involved in meeting visitors, helping in the office, acting as

'Red Hats' to support children who feel sad and lonely, and talking to governors about the school. All these make an outstanding contribution to their preparation for later life. Attendance is below the national average because a number of parents take family holidays in term time and a number of pupils are from traveller families and are unable to attend continuously throughout the year.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good with teachers having an enthusiastic approach to which pupils respond well. There is good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants who all contribute to the lesson planning and the monitoring of progress. Relationships are excellent. All staff have good access to training and their subject knowledge is good. Focussed explanations linked to the learning intentions help pupils make good progress. Tracking of progress is good and target setting is used well with pupils fully involved. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and, although the majority of marking contains advice on how to improve, this is not consistent across the school. Teachers do not always set high expectations for the presentation of work and the frequent use of work sheets and separate pages glued into books makes them untidy. Teachers are often restricted in their teaching styles because of the small classrooms and this prevents good lessons from becoming outstanding ones.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has been extended to include Italian lessons and the school employs specialist teachers in music, dance and physical education. Other opportunities are developing through the Creative Partnership initiative that enables pupils to learn about different aspects of London through focussed visits. Others work with a poet writing their own anthologies. As one parent said, there is an impressive range of cultural visits. The provision for personal, social and health education is an integral part of the curriculum with outstanding outcomes. The provision for pupils who are finding work difficult is excellent and includes a wide range of intervention strategies such as booster classes or individual support, to help them. The school plans, rightly, to review the curriculum content to ensure that the more able pupils continue to be provided for.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The pastoral care of pupils is outstanding. The school knows its children and their families well and this is evident in the rigorous tracking and outstanding range of support programmes such as art or interactive play therapy. The support staff are an integral part of a well-led team. Every class has at least one full time teaching assistant and numerous other helpers contribute to the support programme on a regular basis. Targets for pupils with specific learning difficulties are very focussed and appropriate and their progress is often exceptionally high. The school is a well-maintained and safe place. Risk assessments are rigorous. Procedures to support vulnerable pupils are all in place including appropriate links with external agencies. Teachers give very good verbal academic guidance. The school has developed its own tracking system to suit pupils' needs and is working to make it even better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and governors provide good leadership and management. The headteacher has made an outstanding contribution by building a team who share her high expectations of pupil progress and care. She has given them the time and the tools to support them. All levels of management work very well as a team and the headteacher has reviewed responsibilities well to make the best use of their areas of expertise to raise standards. Governors know the school well and fulfil their duties well. They show a willingness to develop further by attending training and an 'away' weekend with staff. They are involved in self-assessment and in producing the school development plan. All leaders and managers work as a team to raise standards. Challenging targets are used and this is supported by the comprehensive tracking system. Everyone in the school is involved in review processes and the self-assessment systems, and the way they are used, are outstanding. They are aware that further work with parents needs doing to improve attendance and they are working hard to overcome teaching issues caused by the small classrooms.

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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	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	1

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	3
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	1

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	1
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

12 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Margaret Clitherow RC Primary School, London, NW10 0BG

Thank you for making us so welcome at your school. We enjoyed being at your school, meeting with you and your teachers and talking with you during the day. Yours is a good school. You and the school have many strengths including:

- you all enjoy school and behaviour is outstanding
- the staff take very good care of you and ensure you are kept safe
- relationships in the school are excellent
- many of your personal qualities are outstanding
- teachers and other staff help those of you who find learning difficult
- during your time in the school, you all make good progress
- teaching is always at least satisfactory and most is good
- the headteacher and all the staff are working hard to improve the school.

In order to help the school improve and become even better, we have asked the school to:

- provide more variety in the types of lesson you are given to help you learn more quickly and reach higher standards
- talk to your parents to encourage them to ensure you are able to come to school more regularly by not taking holidays in term time
- all mark your work in the same way with comments that help you improve.

We wish each one of you every success and happiness in your future education.

Yours sincerely

John Horwood

Lead Inspector