

Saint Raphael Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101925
Local Authority	Ealing
Inspection number	307855
Inspection dates	25–26 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Nicola Davies

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	455
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Henry
Headteacher	Mrs A Staunton
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2003
School address	Hartfield Avenue Northolt UB5 6NL
Telephone number	020 8841 0848
Fax number	020 8842 4617

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large multi-ethnic primary school with a nursery, which serves the parishes of St. Raphael in Yeading and St. Bernard in Northolt. Half of the pupils are of White British heritage and half are from a variety of backgrounds including European, Irish, Caribbean, African and other Black and mixed heritages. The school's intake is similarly socially diverse. A quarter of pupils are bilingual, including some who are at early stages of learning English as an additional language when they join the school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Saint Raphael is a very popular school which provides its pupils with a good education. This is evident to visitors and parents who appreciate that their children will 'love, live and learn' within the school's strongly caring, Catholic ethos. Parents value this ethos and know that their children are 'very happy and well nurtured' during their time there. Pupils enjoy school a great deal, behave well and considerately and their attendance is outstanding. Such positive and conscientious attitudes have an impact on both their good personal development and well-being and on their good standards and achievement. The good curriculum provides well-considered opportunities for pupils to develop their basic skills alongside experiences which will be useful to them in later life. For example, the popular initiative where each class grows its own vegetables adds to the pupils' good understanding of both healthy living and economic well-being.

Pupils achieve well throughout the school because they are taught well. Standards are consistently above average in English, mathematics and science, and this represents good progress from pupils' starting points. The teaching and curriculum for mathematics is a real strength of the school, and English has been improved further through a successful focus on raising standards in writing. In science, facts are well taught and emphasis has rightly been placed on encouraging more investigations. This is beginning to have an impact but there is still some way to go in order to ensure every pupil makes good or better progress in this subject. For example, on occasions, the strong focus on literacy skills in recorded work detracts from the scientific principles which are the focus of the lesson. This issue has already been identified and plans are in place to strengthen this area. The dedicated headteacher, her very experienced deputy and the strong senior leadership team, work together very closely to set an exceptionally clear direction for the school. This includes both raising standards further and enhancing the already very good quality of care and support for pupils. Despite some challenges in ensuring continuity of staffing, they have maintained the quality of education at the school as well as achieving a number of well-led improvements. Together they assure the school's good capacity to go from strength to strength.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage provides children with a good start to their formal education. Since the time of the previous inspection, it has been extended and now includes a well equipped purpose-built nursery. This is popular with parents, who praise both the quality of care and the stimulating introduction to learning their children receive. Across the Nursery and Reception classes, children learn enthusiastically through a good range of activities. They pursue their ideas independently as well as through activities led by the skilful adults. There is a strong staff focus on developing children's early reading and writing skills. The success of this work shows in the enthusiasm of children in the Nursery classes for learning about letters and sounds and in the good progress Reception children make in using these in their reading and writing. Both Nursery and Reception classes include covered outdoor areas but there is more work to be done to extend the range of opportunities for children to learn outdoors.

Most children enter the Nursery with the expected skills for their age although a growing proportion have difficulties with aspects of speech, language and communication. Staff work together to ensure records are kept which monitor children's progress and evaluate their next

steps. These show that children make good progress to reach or exceed the expected levels for their age by the time they enter Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and progress in science.
- Enhance the outdoor curriculum in the Foundation Stage.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Within the overall picture of above average standards and good achievement, pupils make particularly good progress in mathematics. Staff have worked successfully over the past two years and, as a result, pupils now make similarly good progress in writing. For example, teachers set individual writing targets which pupils understand. They are now rightly focussing on science.

Pupils achieve well irrespective of ethnicity, ability and gender. For example, pupils who join the school at early stages of learning English are helped to make rapid progress and achieve as well as their peers by the end of Year 6. Pupils who need extra support with learning to read and write and those with speech and language difficulties also make good progress because they are identified quickly and receive very effective support. The school has identified a need to ensure that all pupils who are potentially more able make good or better progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well, are both confident and courteous and contribute to mutually supportive and respectful relationships with adults in the school. They enjoy coming to school and this is supported by parents' views and by their outstanding attendance. Pupils make a good contribution to school life through the wide variety of responsibilities they hold. Members of the effective school council take great pride in the impact of their work. For instance, they suggested setting up the school vegetable patches to promote health eating and this, in turn, contributed to the school gaining a Healthy School Award. Selling vegetables provides opportunities for pupils to develop their enterprise skills. Pupils are keen to support a wide range of charity appeals and are conscious of their responsibilities in the wider community, for example by supporting a group of children in Ethiopia. Pupils show a good awareness of safety issues and talk about these with insight. Standards in basic skills and the ability to work in partnerships and teams ensure that pupils are well prepared for secondary school and their future beyond school. The strong Catholic ethos of the school means that spiritual, moral and social development is good. The school is currently developing further opportunities to promote understanding across cultures, such as the links they have established with a school in China and the forthcoming International Day.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan activities effectively and focus well on what their pupils should learn during the session. This means that pupils are clear about what they are expected to achieve, although they do not always have opportunities to judge for themselves how well they have done. Skilful teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. On occasions, activities for

more able pupils are not challenging enough. The school has identified this as an area which needs to be more consistent by building on the very good practice that already exists. Teachers and other staff are alert to the needs of pupils learning English as an additional language and this helps them to acquire English well and make good progress by the time they leave the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well adapted to meet the needs of pupils in lessons, particularly so in mathematics. Information and communication technology (ICT) has improved significantly since the last inspection. Pupils are well equipped with essential ICT skills and there are good opportunities to help them use technology in other areas of their learning. The curriculum is also enhanced by a variety of activities that contribute well to pupils' learning and personal development. Pupils talk enthusiastically about special events held throughout the year, such as their visit to a range of national museums, Kew Gardens and Whipsnade Zoo. Similarly, the school organises just under twenty extra-curricular activities which are well attended by pupils. However there is scope to widen the curriculum, particularly in the range of creative experiences for pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A high priority is given to this aspect of the school's work. One parent's comment summed up the views of many when they stated, 'All teachers are very caring and care for children at this school is very strong'. This warm and caring atmosphere along with good procedures for safeguarding pupils, ensures that pupils feel very safe and secure. The individual progress of pupils is tracked and systems are in place to monitor and target additional support where needed and to raise attainment. Pupils experiencing difficulties are identified at an early stage and are then extremely well supported to ensure they reach their potential through an imaginative variety of extra programmes. Their progress against targets is regularly reviewed with them and parents are kept well involved and informed. Trained and caring teaching assistants play an important part in this success, as do the well established and very strong relationships with outside agencies. There are good procedures for the induction of pupils to the school and pupils are very well prepared for their move to secondary school.

Academic guidance includes very regularly maintained records of pupils' progress. At its best, marking and guidance highlight the good aspects of pupils' work and suggests what they need to do next to develop it further. As yet, this is not consistent across the school. The school is continuing to develop individual targets and pupils' involvement in their own assessment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

There is a strong sense of purpose in the work of the school, both moral and academic. The inspiring senior leadership team ensure that subjects and specialist areas of the school's work are well-led and monitored. This has led to improvements, for example in assessment, ICT, writing, the Foundation Stage and in the very good quality of support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school places a successful emphasis on ensuring that

only high calibre staff are appointed to the school and that all staff are supported to reach their potential. This is proving successful in overcoming local challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers. Teachers and assistants are deployed very effectively to assure value for money and particularly well to assist pupils needing support with their learning.

The role of governors and the challenge they provide is good. Leaders and managers keep a close eye on the performance of different groups of pupils, but they do not yet set targets to exclude the possibility of gaps between, for example, boys' and girls' attainment.

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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?	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	1
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?	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	1
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

03 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Saint Raphael Catholic Primary School, Northolt, UB5 6NL

On behalf of your inspectors I would like to let you know that it was a pleasure to meet so many of you when we visited your school recently. Thank you so much for welcoming us so warmly. You and your teachers made us all feel very welcome and you were all very helpful in answering all our questions and telling us about Saint Raphael.

We agree with your parents that you go to a good school. Your teachers want to make sure that all of you do the best you can, both in your lessons and in learning about how to live. They do a good job of this, helping you to do well in your studies and to become mature young people who care about others. You play a good part in this too by behaving well, being considerate of your friends and your teachers and coming to school very regularly. The adults at the school take good care of you and teach you well, and these are some of the reasons why you enjoy school so much.

As you probably realise, your teachers care a great deal about each and every one of you. This is why they are always thinking about how they can make things even better. They have been working on making sure that you all enjoy writing and are now looking at how they can help you to learn even more about science. They were pleased to hear that we agreed with them that this is the right thing to do. We have also asked them to look at the outdoor areas near the Nursery and Reception classes to see how they can make sure that the youngest children at the school have as good opportunities to learn outdoors as they do indoors.

Thank you for helping us get to know your school and please pass on our thanks to all the adults too.

With best wishes for your continued success.

Nicola Davies

Lead Inspector