

St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102842
Local Authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	308137
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	469
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Christine Hammersley
Headteacher	Mrs Delia Doyle
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Cranbrook Road Barkingside Ilford IG2 6RG

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2008
Inspection number	308137

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is larger than average. Its intake is changing. Half of the pupils are now from minority ethnic backgrounds and one third of the pupils have a mother tongue other than English. Free school meal eligibility, although below average, is rising. The proportion of pupils who need additional support with their learning is below average and increasing, while the number with a statement for their special educational needs has risen to double the national average.

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is through a part-time Nursery and two Reception classes. The school is part of the Gants Hill Extended Schools Partnership, which aims to meet the needs of the community more effectively and develop stronger links between the schools involved. The school has received the Activemark award as recognition of its commitment to physical education. The school hosts the privately run Cheeky Jack's Kids Club before and after school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Staff and governors are accurate in their assessment that St Augustine's is a good school. It is improving at a considerable rate under the headteacher's astute leadership. She has developed a strong staff team, who share her commitment to the achievement of all pupils. They fully understand the nature of the school's changing community and work tirelessly to meet the many needs of the pupils. The headteacher ensures that the school is outward-looking and becoming increasingly involved in the local community through the Extended Schools Partnership. Parents are very impressed with the headteacher and all she is doing. This parent summed up the views of very many when writing, 'The school is well led by an exceptionally good headteacher and a staff team that brings out the very best in our children.'

Parents are particularly pleased with the way the school cares for their children and develops strong Christian values in them. As one wrote, 'The school is an exemplary example of amalgamating education, pupil welfare and faith at its best.' Pupils are very proud of their school and have a significant voice in its development. They are strongly committed to others less fortunate than themselves, as seen through their many charity fundraising activities. The pupils feel happy in school and know well how to stay safe. They show respect and consideration for each other. They develop into thoughtful and sensible young people who hugely enjoy school and their lessons, and have a great sense of responsibility. This is reflected in high levels of attendance and very positive attitudes to learning.

Their strong academic and personal skills mean the pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education and beyond. Their good achievement is based on effective teaching that has its foundations in an interesting and rich curriculum that extends their learning and generates much enjoyment. Classrooms are exciting and well-managed places in which the pupils can learn and thrive. From skills broadly as expected for their age on entry to the EYFS, pupils make good progress so that standards are well above average by the end of Year 6. The successful focus last year on improving writing has remained as a priority for now. While pupils achieve well in information and communication technology (ICT), low resource levels mean they do not have the opportunity to use their skills to help their learning across other subjects.

There is no complacency here, rather a continuing drive shared by all to identify how good practice can become even better. The school has redressed weaknesses identified in science at the last inspection and standards are now well above average. Much better use is now made of assessment information to set challenging targets, check the progress of pupils and put in place appropriate support programmes when an individual might be in danger of falling behind. Incisive evaluation based on rigorous monitoring of all aspects of pupil and teacher performance gives staff and governors a very clear picture of the school's qualities and where further attention is needed. These features and the record of recent improvements mean the school is poised to meet the challenges of a changing community and achieve the headteacher's high ambitions for it and its pupils.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children start in the Nursery with skills, knowledge and understanding that are in line with those of typical three-year-olds. They make good progress during their time in the EYFS so that most exceed expected levels in all areas of their learning by the end of Reception. Those

who are still at an early stage of learning English are well supported by a range of high-quality staff. Adults plan and organise a wide variety of activities that enable children to explore, play and develop at a good pace both inside the classroom and outdoors. Activities are often fun and children in Reception enjoyed designing and making a space rocket for role play activities outside. Provision for children's welfare is good, although water is not always freely available for children to drink. Routines are clearly established, so children enjoy coming to school, feel safe and secure and behave well. As a result, their personal development is good. Emphasis is placed on eating healthy food and on vigorous activity for health and fitness. Children are taught effectively to pay attention to their own and others' safety. They learn to share and take turns, and enjoy opportunities to be independent and make choices in their learning. Assessment procedures across the EYFS are inconsistently applied and unwieldy. Consequently, children's progress is not always tracked as systematically as it could be to inform planning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use ICT skills to support their learning.
- Develop more systematic and manageable procedures across the EYFS to monitor the children's progress and to inform planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The good start pupils make in the EYFS is built upon well across Years 1 to 6. This good progress extends to pupils who find learning difficult and any who have English as an additional language. Assessment results for Year 2 pupils have been rising and were above average in all areas in 2008. The school identified the reasons for a fall in writing standards two years ago, particularly in Year 6 test results, and has taken very successful action to reverse the trend by focusing on improving grammar and sentence construction. This has led to a significant improvement in the pupils' writing throughout the school. It remains a focus, reflecting the school's commitment to even higher standards. Year 6 test results were well above average in all subjects in 2008. Not only did almost all pupils reach the expected level for their age, but also many exceeded it, particularly in science. These standards are reflected in the current pupils' work and confirmed by school assessment data.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy being at school very much. They are pleased with the way the school involves them in school life. As one said, 'Coming to school is good because we have a say.' As a result of this empowerment, pupils make a strong contribution to school life. They take responsibility readily as prefects and house captains. The school council is effective in bringing about improvements, such as to lunchtime arrangements. Its members also show initiative. Recently they devised a '10 pence Race' to raise money for extra books and equipment. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning which contribute well to the progress they make. Behaviour is good, especially in lessons. Occasionally, these high standards slip when pupils move around the school at break times. Pupils have a very clear grasp of what is right and wrong. They develop social skills well and show good knowledge of, and respect for, different cultures. Thanks to the very strong Catholic ethos of the school and the very good provision, pupils' spiritual development is excellent.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. Much of the teaching is lively, interesting, engages the pupils and generates an enthusiasm for learning across all age groups. Teachers have high expectations to which the pupils are keen to aspire. Pupils enjoy sharing ideas with each other or taking part in role play and other drama activities that stimulate their imaginations, particularly as they prepare pieces of written work. Many teachers make creative use of the interactive whiteboards and other resources to put across new ideas and reinforce learning. Teaching assistants are particularly effective in their support for individuals and groups of pupils. They not only work with them on tasks but also check their understanding and encourage and them to answer during sessions of whole class activities. Teachers challenge the more able pupils well in most classes and many use questions skilfully to draw out ideas from pupils. However, at times the work set does not extend the pupils' thinking, and questions only require short answers that do not confirm if all pupils have understood.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The many engaging activities that teachers provide help pupils to enjoy learning a great deal. The very good arrangements the school has for pupils' personal, social and health education significantly enhance their levels of maturity and emotional development. They also ensure that pupils know how to look after themselves and recognise risk. The award of the Activemark acknowledges that the school sets great store in helping pupils to keep fit. The planning of learning opportunities is detailed and effective in making provision that will suit the particular needs of groups and individuals, including bilingual learners. The curriculum is significantly enriched by the many visits and visitors. These include those parents who come into school to talk about their cultural heritage. The good number of lunchtime and after school clubs also adds much to the depth and range of the curriculum. The resources available for pupils to develop computer skills lag behind those found in many other schools. This detracts from the progress that pupils make.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Teaching staff show high levels of care when dealing with pupils. Good arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils stay safe and understand what is involved in being healthy. Procedures for safeguarding their welfare are robust. The great importance the school places on pupils' well-being is clear from the large number of staff who have undergone first aid training. The provision the school makes for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very effective in helping pupils to become sensible, respectful and mature. Support for those who need additional help with their learning and language development is based on careful monitoring of their progress so that individually tailored programmes can focus on their specific needs. Marking of pupils' work generally helps them to identify the next steps in their learning. However, an inconsistency in the way in which teachers set short-term targets reduces the progress that some pupils make.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's leadership skills are outstanding. Together with the newly constructed leadership team, staff and governors, she has improved the school significantly since its last inspection. The revised vision statement is, 'In St. Augustine's we always try to do our best. Together, we work hard and play fairly, praying and caring for everyone as Jesus taught us.' This takes account of all major stakeholders' views and is now firmly embedded in the ethos of the school. Self-evaluation is detailed, sharp and rigorous. All aspects are carefully monitored, with an emphasis on promoting a high quality of care and education. Parents and carers are strongly supportive of the school and strategies for engaging them and the local community through initiatives such as 'Language of the Term' and International Day, have been highly effective. Governors are fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and understand what the school needs to do to improve further. The school benefits from good links with the Extended Schools' Partnership, and leadership and management of the school provide it with a good capacity to improve further.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

17 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, Ilford, IG2 6RG

You may remember that inspectors visited your school recently. I am now writing to let you know what we found out. Before I do, I would just like to say thank you for making us feel welcome and for being so keen to share your thoughts about your school. We had a chance to talk with many of you and we have told your teachers how you were very helpful and polite. It was great to hear how much you enjoy school. It was also good to hear how safe you feel in school and that there is always someone to talk to if you are worried.

St Augustine's Catholic Primary is a good school with several impressive things about it, not the least of which is your attendance and good behaviour. Teachers and support staff care for you well and make learning enjoyable through the clubs and other activities. The school is good at helping you to keep fit, safe and healthy. We were impressed with the way you involve yourselves in helping the school to improve through your school council. You make good progress in all areas, which means you are prepared well to move on to secondary school. Most of you reach the standards expected of you by the time you leave and many of you do better than this. Those of you who need extra help with learning or your English language are supported well.

Even a good school like yours can improve. We have asked your teachers to provide you with more opportunities to use computers to support your learning. We have also asked those who teach in the Nursery and Reception classes to find better ways of noting how well the children are doing so that activities are provided at the right level for them.

The staff and governors want the school to continue to be successful and we know you will play your part by continuing to behave so well and working so hard. We wish you every success in your future.

Yours faithfully

Martin Beale

Lead Inspector