

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102846
Local Authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	308139
Inspection date	10 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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	460
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bill Whiston
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Brown
Date of previous school inspection	3 June 2003
School address	Benton Road Ilford IG1 4AS
Telephone number	020 8590 5223
Fax number	020 8503 8344

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The Inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- What are the most significant factors in the school's leadership and management strategy and how do they impact on pupils' achievement and progress?
- What impact are leaders having on raising standards at KS1?
- What impact have leaders had on improving pupil behaviour?

Evidence was gathered from the analysis of school documentation, observation of lessons, conversations with learners and discussions with teachers and senior staff. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This larger than average primary school serves a diverse population. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is average. The majority of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Almost half of pupils are learning English as an additional language. The percentage identified with learning difficulties is average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational need is above average. However, this percentage fluctuates greatly between year groups. The percentage of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times is higher than average. The school has gained the National 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

St Aidan's provides a good standard of education for its pupils because it is well led and managed and teaching is good. Pupils' attainment when they first join the school is below, and sometimes well below, average. They make good progress throughout their time in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. The results of national assessments for Year 2 pupils have varied greatly in recent years due, largely, to differences in the make-up of each year group. In addition, last year's group presented particular challenges which resulted in a dip in results in 2007 to below average. However, this still represented good progress for those pupils considering their particularly low starting points. However, leaders and managers are not complacent and have rightly identified the need to raise results in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. The current performance of Year 2 pupils indicates that they are making good progress towards their targets. Pupils continue to achieve well between Years 3 and 6 and reach just above average standards in national tests in Year 6.

Children enjoy school because they say, 'We have good lessons'. These comments are reflections of the consistently good teaching pupils receive, particularly in English and mathematics. Learning is made interesting because teachers are skilled at asking questions which make pupils think. Pupils frequently engage usefully in paired working that enables them to practise speaking and listening. This particularly helps those pupils whose first language is not English to make good progress. Good, collaborative working was observed in Year 3 classes where pupils busily prepared their Christmas reports. In another good Year 6 lesson, pupils worked together well to solve practice test questions. Discussion was mature and pupils challenged each other's reasoning.

Pupils feel safe and secure and adopt healthy lifestyles. They know where to turn if they are experiencing problems and confidently say, 'Teachers sort out our problems and counsellors make us feel better.' Another said that he particularly liked the suggestion box where he could put a message if something was bothering him. Pupil's excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is built on respect for other people's values, feelings and beliefs. Personal, social and health education (PSHE), along with 'circle time', particularly improves the social and emotional aspects of learning. There is an effective school council that has worked with the Healthy Schools Leader to encourage more healthy packed lunches and in monitoring school meals. Pupils enjoy the responsibility the school gives them and are proud to be playleaders and help younger children enjoy playtime. Many classes have reading partners where older pupils support younger pupils in their learning. Pupils said that they enjoy participating in recycling projects and in raising money for charity. They take an interest in their school environment and took part in a sponsored bounce. This raised money to improve playground facilities which were designed by the pupils in a competition. Pupils are prepared well for the future because they have good basic skills. In addition to this, activities such as running the Year 6 production as a business venture help them to understand marketing, selling and making a profit.

Last year there was a growing concern amongst both the school and parents about the behaviour of a significant number of pupils. The school has worked extremely hard to combat some particularly challenging behaviour in some year groups. Action taken by senior leaders has resulted in the implementation of a new behaviour policy this September. This has had a rapid impact and behaviour in the school is now good. The progress of those particular pupils has improved and they achieve well in their lessons. The pupils confirm that behaviour has improved

and spoke excitedly about rewards and consequences and how they know what is expected of them.

The good curriculum has an impact on learning and gives them many opportunities to participate in school life through extra-curricular clubs and a variety of activities during 'curriculum enrichment sessions'. There are opportunities to be creative. Specialist art and music teachers enable pupils to develop their artistic talents and to enjoy Irish dancing lessons, African drumming and playing instruments. Pupils enjoy the many other activities they can join in with such as Spanish, art, drama, music and sport. Many links have been established with two local secondary schools creating opportunities for the pupils to do harder work in science and mathematics. In lessons, pupils are able to link subjects together. For example, pupils were seen developing their skills in information and communication technology and translating these into making storyboards for use in literacy.

The provision for care, guidance and support is good and has a positive impact on the personal development of pupils. Assessment and academic guidance are effective and ensure that pupils achieve well. The tracking system effectively identifies those pupils in need of extra help. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress. Most pupils know and understand their targets, but there are some pupils who are unclear about how to reach the next level of attainment. Pupils say that they particularly appreciate the comments they receive from teachers in their exercise books which they report 'helps us to improve our work.' This approach to academic guidance is the result of diligent monitoring by subject leaders who regularly review teaching, learning and the marking of books. Pupils are looked after well and the school has the confidence of the majority of parents. In the words of one, 'The teachers and staff at St. Aidan's are second to none. I was amazed and very grateful for the support given in times of difficulty.'

The headteacher and her deputy have formed an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses and self-evaluation is good. Performance is monitored effectively and improvements are implemented. Overall, the school communicates well with parents, but a significant minority say they do not feel that their views are listened to, or sufficiently taken into account. Subject leaders are effective and drive improvement through in their subjects. The governing body is effective; it now operates more efficiently by organising 'governing body days' which facilitate high quality support and challenge for the school. Improvement since the time of the previous inspection has been good and capacity to continue to improve is also good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills which are below, and sometimes well below, average for their age. This is particularly the case in communication, language and literacy. Since the time of the last inspection the intake of children has changed and over half speak English as an additional language. The Foundation Stage leader ensures that children are thoroughly assessed on entry to the Nursery. This enables teachers to build upon what the children already know on an individual basis so that they get a good start to their education, although standards are below those expected at the end of Reception. Staff monitor children's all-round development very carefully and there are good systems to check on the progress of different groups. Because of the particularly low starting points of children last year, strategies were put in place to make sure that extra support and help were focused on those who needed it. This has had a good impact on achievement and children have made good progress. There has been a real emphasis on developing language and social skills which has paid dividends.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement at KS1 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Ensure that the views of parents are taken into account sufficiently, so that they feel listened to and part of the school community.

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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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	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

18 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Aidan's Catholic Primary School, Ilford, IG1 4AS

I enjoyed my visit to your school and thank you for the friendly way you spoke to me. I was very interested in what you had to say. You told me about what you liked and enjoyed in school and why. You told me how much you enjoy the trips that the school organises for you and how the school council has helped to make the food more healthy in school. You are able to participate in many school clubs and activities that make learning fun for you. I saw how well you behave in class and in the playground. You told me how much this has improved this year.

Your headteacher leads the school well. Along with her team of teachers, managers and governors, she aims to help all of you do the best that you can. Teachers work hard to provide you with interesting lessons and you work well in pairs when you are asked to discuss things.

I think St Aidan's is a good school. This means it does many things well, but others need to be better. I have asked the school to help you do better in your work in reading, writing and maths by the end of Year 2. I have also asked your school to listen more carefully to what your parents and carers think about your school.

We hope you continue to enjoy your time at St Aidan's.

Kind Regards

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Lead Inspector