

# St Mary's Walthamstow CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103092
<b>Local Authority</b>	Waltham Forest
<b>Inspection number</b>	308215
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Steven Hill

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	183
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Rob Fox
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Beverley Hall (acting)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 June 2003
<b>School address</b>	The Drive Walthamstow London E17 3BN
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8521 1066
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8521 0756

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<b>Age group</b>	5-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an over-subscribed, average sized primary school serving an ethnically diverse community in London. The largest groups of pupils are of White British, Black Caribbean or Black African heritages, with the rest coming from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. Although an average proportion of pupils have a home language other than English, hardly any are at the early stages of acquiring English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average, the majority of these having moderate learning difficulties. The school has suffered considerable disruption in the last eighteen months. The headteacher retired after extensive absence through illness and a permanent replacement has not been appointed. There have been a number of other changes of staffing, and major changes to the governing body. The deputy headteacher is currently the acting headteacher.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school is providing a satisfactory education, having made considerable improvement in the last few months after a time of great disruption. This recovery has been led very well by the acting headteacher, making good use of support from the local authority and the Diocese.

Pupils achieve well and attain above average standards by the end of Year 6. Progress is generally satisfactory in lessons, and is good in an increasing number. The key to the school's success in driving pupils' achievement, however, is the good quality of academic support and guidance. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully and any who are in danger of not meeting the challenging targets that the school sets for them are quickly identified. The school then uses a wide range of effective intervention programmes, with individuals and groups, to help them make good progress. The skilled teaching assistants, who work with these pupils, make a significant contribution to this success by targeting work carefully to individual needs. Increasingly, the school is also providing a range of programmes to challenge more able pupils and help them reach their full potential. These intervention programmes are particularly effective in helping older pupils to make good progress.

Teaching is satisfactory overall, with an increasing proportion of good lessons taught. The acting headteacher, backed by skilled staff from the local authority, has worked hard to help teachers to improve their practice. Lessons are generally managed well. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and treat them with respect. In return, pupils show respect for their teachers and work hard to try to please them. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. However, there is still too much inconsistency in teaching. A minority of lessons have too slow a pace, too little is accomplished in the time available, or the pupils are given work which is rather dull. In these lessons, some pupils' attention wanders and they do not learn as much as they should. The assessment of pupils' progress and its use to match work to individual needs have improved considerably. However, these are still inconsistent, and sometimes pupils are given work that is either too hard or too easy for them, slowing their progress.

The school is a harmonious community where pupils from all origins get on well together and show genuine concern for each other. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory and has some significant strengths. Behaviour is good, pupils enjoy school and they take a pride in their work. However, they often lack independence in their learning, and their teamwork skills are limited because they have too few opportunities to practise them.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting headteacher provides a very clear lead to colleagues. She has succeeded in making significant improvements to school systems, raising staff morale and providing a common purpose after a time of considerable uncertainty. Staff are now working as a more effective team. The monitoring of teaching by the acting headteacher and local authority colleagues has given teachers feedback that has helped them improve their practice. The much-changed governing body has a clear view of its role in the school. Subject leaders are starting to develop their roles well, although they are not yet involved sufficiently in the monitoring of teaching. Too much weight currently is placed on the acting headteacher. The school is in the process of restructuring its leadership, but final decisions have not yet been taken. Parents are generally supportive of the school and appreciate what it does for their children. However, a minority of parents have lost some confidence in the school during the recent disruption. Some do not feel they have enough information about what is happening,

despite some positive efforts recently to involve parents more, and the school is keen to extend this further. Despite recent improvements, in the absence of a permanent headteacher, the impending loss of some external support, and the need to finalise and implement a new management structure, the capacity to improve is only satisfactory.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Children settle happily into the Reception class and soon feel at home there. They start with standards that are generally below those expected nationally, except in their personal, social and emotional development. They make satisfactory progress, although few reach the early learning goals by the beginning of Year 1, because of their low starting points. The school has made significant changes in arrangements over the last two years to bring provision more into line with national recommendations. An improved outdoor learning area has been developed, although it is not used enough to support children's progress in all aspects of the curriculum. Staff work hard to provide a range of interesting, hands-on experiences for children that often generate a lot of enjoyment. However, adults do not consistently intervene to extend children's play or develop their speaking and social skills, when they are undertaking these activities.

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

- Improve teaching by being more consistent, particularly in matching work more closely to the needs of individuals in lessons, and in giving pupils more opportunities to be independent or work in teams.
- Establish a clear management structure that provides a systematic basis for monitoring and supporting learning and standards in all subjects.
- Improve provision in the Foundation Stage by making more use of the outdoor areas, and intervening in children's play more consistently to develop their learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good. Over the course of their time in school, all pupils, whatever their abilities or backgrounds, make good progress overall. Children make steady progress in the Reception class and do particularly well in their physical development, their knowledge and understanding of the world, and their understanding of letters and sounds. They build well on this secure start in the Key Stage 1 classes, and overall standards are generally close to the national average by the end of Year 2. Their progress accelerates during Key Stage 2. This is because of a very extensive and wide range of intervention programmes, which succeed in helping individuals and groups who have particular needs make good progress. Any pupils, whatever their ability, who are not meeting the school's challenging targets for progress, are identified and given extra help that is matched to their individual needs. As a result, by the end of Year 6, standards are significantly above average in English, mathematics and science.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy coming to school, and show it by their good levels of attendance and positive attitudes to learning. They feel safe, and are right to regard behaviour as good. Pupils told the inspectors that a determined school initiative has come close to eliminating bullying. They have a clear sense of right and wrong, and a particularly well-developed insight into moral issues such as honesty and fairness. They respond maturely to opportunities to make a positive contribution to school life, such as being 'Playground Friends', or members of the school council. They also value the occasions when they bring skills to the wider local community such as the choir's annual contribution to a local nursery's Summer Fair. However, external engagements like this are relatively few. Pupils can explain how to keep themselves safe and healthy, while acknowledging that they are sometimes tempted by less healthy options at lunchtimes. Their learning in key subjects, and their personal integrity, will support their future economic well-being, although many still lack skills in teamwork and independent decision-making.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is variable, but is satisfactory overall. Discipline is secure and is based on clear and consistent expectations of work and behaviour, which pupils try to meet. The proportion of good lessons has increased as teachers have improved their use of assessment to match work to individuals' needs, although this is still inconsistent. Good lessons often feature a brisk pace, and opportunities for all pupils to be involved. Science lessons include exciting practical work, for example. Teachers explain things well to pupils and increasingly use interactive whiteboards effectively to illustrate and clarify their teaching. However, there are still too many lessons where learning is satisfactory, because of too slow a pace or too little active involvement of pupils. Pupils are given too few opportunities to work in teams, or to be independent, although this is improving. Teaching in the wide range of intervention groups is good, and results in good progress in these sessions.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The school's curriculum rightly emphasises reading, writing and mathematics. The recent introduction of a new programme for teaching the earliest stages of reading is already helping pupils gain confidence in working with letters and sounds. There is especially good provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, and for the particularly able, so they progress well. The programme for information and communication technology (ICT) has been hindered in the past by inadequate equipment, but after the current upgrading, the school will be well placed to realise its ambitions in the subject. Many pupils enjoy singing and playing an instrument, and there is good evidence of their work in the visual arts displays. Lessons across the school help pupils learn about health, safety and personal relationships. Staff rightly recognise the need for better planning and organisation of this work, and have made it a priority for development. A sound programme of out-of-school clubs, together with local study visits enriches the curriculum.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

The school rightly gives the highest priority to caring for pupils, and refers to St Mary's as a 'telling school'. Relationships between staff and pupils are close and trusting so pupils feel able to share their hopes and anxieties with adults in full confidence. There are good arrangements to ensure pupils' safety and emotional well-being, including links with external agencies, which support a calm and happy environment for learning. A major strength is the high quality of academic support and guidance. Pupils' progress is checked regularly and very effectively. Individuals whose progress falls behind the school's high expectations are identified quickly, and are given extra help so that they achieve as well as they can. After a period of strained relationships and instability, the school is working effectively to rebuild its partnership with parents in support of their children's learning.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Clear leadership from the acting headteacher has ensured the maintenance of good achievement and a positive ethos in the school, despite many difficulties. Support from staff at all levels and increasingly effective teamwork have backed this up. Subject leaders have increased their involvement in supporting colleagues, although they are still not sufficiently involved in monitoring the effectiveness of lessons. The governing body has rethought its role and how it can best support the school and hold it to account. The school has largely recovered from the disruption that marred the last school year. Improvement in the last six months has been good. Systems to track progress have been improved. Challenging targets are set for pupils' achievement, and these are generally met.

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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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### 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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

28 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Walthamstow CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School, London, E17 3BN

Thank you for your help when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you at work.

We were impressed by how well you all get on together, by your good behaviour and by how caring the older pupils are for younger ones. You work hard in class and this is helping you to make good progress in the school. Standards by the end of Year 6 are higher than in most schools. You make steady progress in lessons, and you told us that you enjoy most of your work. The school is very good at keeping an eye on how well everyone is doing, and making sure you get extra help if you need it. This is why you all do so well. In a few lessons, teachers sometimes give you work that is either too hard or too easy. They are working hard to make sure this does not happen so much, and we have agreed that this is one of the most important things needed to improve the school. We also agreed that it would be helpful if teachers gave you more chances to work in teams, and to work independently.

Children enjoy their start to school in the Reception class, and the adults give them lots of exciting things to do. We think that the outdoor area should be used more to help children learn in different ways. We have also agreed that the adults should talk to the children more whilst they are playing, to help them understand more about different things.

Running the school has been difficult in the last couple of years because of staff leaving or being ill, but your education has continued to be satisfactory. Mrs Hall has done a really good job in keeping things going, so that you carried on making good progress and enjoying school. The governors and other adults are busy reorganising how they run the school, so that you can do even better. We have agreed with them that this is important and will help the school improve. You can help by continuing to behave well and working hard, especially when the teachers want you to work in groups or on your own.

We hope you carry on enjoying school,

Best wishes,

Steven Hill

Lead Inspector