

St Elizabeth Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133288
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	316063
Inspection date	4 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Mike Thompson

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	388
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Melian Mansfield
Headteacher	Miss Carolyn Lindsay (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2003
School address	Bonner Road Bethnal Green London E2 9JY
Telephone number	020 8980 3964
Fax number	020 8983 3377

Age group	3-11
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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:

- pupils' achievement and personal development
- the quality of teaching
- how well the school keeps track of pupils' progress
- the leadership and management.

Evidence was gathered from observing lessons, assembly and morning break; discussions with senior managers, governors, pupils and parents; checking the school's records of pupils' progress, the results of questionnaires returned by parents, and looking at other paperwork.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Elizabeth Catholic Primary is a large primary school serving a culturally diverse community within an area with high levels of deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. About two thirds of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. This figure is about three times the national average. About a fifth of the pupils are in the early stages of learning to communicate in English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The school gained Healthy Schools status in 2006. There have been significant changes in the senior management of the school over the past two terms. The headteacher has been on long-term sick leave since February 2007, one of the two deputy heads retired and the other moved on because of promotion. The assistant headteacher is currently running the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Elizabeth Catholic Primary is a good school with many outstanding features. It is effective because it has good leadership and management, good teaching and a well-planned curriculum. Securely underpinning all of the school's work is the high quality provision for promoting the personal development of pupils through its strong Catholic ethos.

The school enjoys a well-deserved reputation within its local community for the education it provides. 'My husband and I are extremely happy with the school'; 'there is a strong sense of community'; 'I really made a wise choice by sending my children to this school' are just a few of the overwhelmingly positive comments received from parents.

The school has an excellent track record of ensuring that pupils achieve well. It consistently moves children from below average starting points when they join the Nursery to high standards by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. As they move through the school, pupils' progress accelerates. Progress is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage, good in Key Stage 1 and outstanding overall in Key Stage 2. The progress made by pupils in Key Stage 2 is particularly rapid because the school makes particularly good use of information from its close monitoring of pupils' performance in this key stage. This enables teachers to provide progressively more focused help to individuals. In addition, teaching in Year 6 is frequently excellent because it generates high levels of interest and enjoyment through the range of methods used by teachers. For example, a Year 6 English lesson captivated the pupils through the unfolding story provided by letters from a distant planet, and enabled them to develop skills in drawing inferences from text. The school is not content to rest on its laurels. It knows that in a few classes pupils only make satisfactory progress, because teaching is less effective than elsewhere. This is due to a variety of reasons. For example, in one of the classes observed, the activities provided for average and higher attaining pupils were not challenging enough. The school is working hard to ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching. It is doing this through close monitoring of teachers' performance and high quality staff training.

An outstanding feature of the school, and one that contributes strongly to the very good climate for learning evident in all classes, is the personal development of the pupils. This is evident in the demeanour of its pupils, for whom qualities of respect, honesty and consideration for others are everyday features of school life. Pupils know very clearly how to keep healthy and safe. The school is helping promote this in many ways including, for example, the 'Walk to school on Wednesday' scheme. The work of the school council helps to promote pupils' excellent skills in citizenship and the strong sense of community within the school. The school councillors interviewed by the inspector were bright and highly articulate. They felt that the pupils have a voice in the development of the school, and spoke enthusiastically about a number of improvements initiated by them, such as the better playground facilities for pupils in Key Stage 1. Pupils get on extremely well together. The school is very good at promoting and celebrating the richness and diversity of pupils' cultural heritage. For instance, the school community greatly enjoyed a recent 'International Day'. This contributed well to pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Behaviour is good overall. In closely controlled situations, such as in lessons and when entering or leaving assembly, it is often impeccable.

The school's average attendance rate does not reflect pupils' real enthusiasm for all aspects of school. The school reports that many absences are due to holidays taken in term time. The school has successfully improved rates of punctuality, and works closely in partnership with

parents. The 'Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities' project was well received by parents and proved to be very useful to them.

St Elizabeth is a school in which every child really does matter. The high quality day-to-day care provided for pupils is an excellent feature appreciated by the pupils. 'People really look after us here' typifies the sort of remarks made by pupils when asked what they thought about their school. Regular, accurate assessments of pupils' progress and targets for improvement, shared each term with parents, enable teachers to give very clear guidance to pupils about what they need to do to improve their work.

The fact that the significant changes in senior management over the past few months have not affected the school's performance is testimony to the robust systems established by the headteacher. All adults working in the school share a clear sense of purpose and work very well together as a team. There are extremely rigorous systems for monitoring the performance of the school, and governors play a key part in this process. The acting headteacher is leading the school with energy and determination. Two consultant headteachers are working closely with her to provide good advice whenever she needs it.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children get off to a satisfactory start in the Nursery and Reception classes. The teaching reflects the staff's secure understanding of how very young children learn. The children enjoy a great deal of individual attention. They are well behaved and busily go about exploring the range of activities provided for them, both indoors and out. The staff are good at building children's confidence as learners, and working with them to help improve learning. The assessment of children's achievements during activities closely directed by adults is satisfactory, but staff do not always note how well children are getting on in the activities provided for them to choose from. Consequently, they do not build up a good enough picture of each child's specific learning needs. The impact is seen in the satisfactory progress made by children in this key stage in comparison to the good or better progress made by older pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure rigorous application of the current action to eliminate inconsistencies in teaching.
- Improve the quality of assessment in the Foundation Stage classes.

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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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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?	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	2
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	1
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	1
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

16 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Elizabeth Catholic Primary School, London, E2 9JY

Thank you for being so welcoming and helping me so much when I came to inspect your school to find out how well you are getting on. I particularly enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to some of you at break time. I would also like to say an extra 'thank you' to the school councillors I met. You showed me just how special St Elizabeth pupils are. I agree with your parents that you go to a good school.

There is so much I like about your school that I can't mention everything, so here is a list of what I think are the most important things.

- You do really well in your work, and when you leave school at the end of Year 6 your results are often among the best in the country. You should be very proud of this.
- You behave well and get on really well with each other.
- You told me how much you appreciate your teachers. They are good at helping you to learn well in lessons.
- Your school keeps a very close check on how well each of you is doing. This means that it can make sure that you get extra help whenever you need it.
- Your teachers are good at organising lots of interesting things for you to do.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are really well looked after.
- Even though your headteacher is ill, your school continues to be successful. This is because your acting headteacher and the other people who help run your school do a good job and make sure that you get a good education.

All of the adults in your school want it to be even better, and there are lots of things that they are already doing to make this happen. For example, they are working hard to make teaching even better than it already is. To help the school, I have suggested that it should also concentrate on improving the checks teachers make on the children in the Nursery and Reception classes. This will help the children in these classes to do even better.

I am sure that you will continue to have great success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Thompson

Lead inspector