

St Mary Magdalene Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100836
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	323361
Inspection date	20 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Gordon Ewing

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	204
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	Mr Paul Charter
Headteacher	Mrs Mary Keeble
Date of previous school inspection	8 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	48 Brayards Road London SE15 3RA
Telephone number	020 7639 1724
Fax number	020 7732 4276

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- the impact of leadership on the personal development and well-being of pupils
- how well teaching challenges pupils so that all achieve as well as they can
- the degree to which governors hold the school to account.

The inspectors met with staff, governors, pupils and parents. Parts of lessons were observed, 131 parents' questionnaires were analysed, samples of pupils' work were examined and information provided by the school, including self-evaluation, was scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors 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

St Mary Magdalene is a smaller than average primary school with one Reception class as part of its EYFS provision. The school serves a community with a broad range of social backgrounds. The majority of pupils are of Black British heritage and several other ethnic minorities are represented in smaller proportions. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than in most schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, is above average. The largest group comprises those with moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils starting and leaving the school other than at expected times is greater than in most schools.

The school has received a number of national awards, including Investors in People and Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Mary Magdalene Primary School is outstanding. The school has made enormous strides over recent years in raising standards and pupils' achievement to noteworthy heights. As one parent wrote, 'I have seen the school go from strength to strength, and I am very pleased with my child's progress.' The school's vision that everyone can achieve their best is being fully realised. Every individual is genuinely valued, and pupils are supported very effectively so that their achievement is impressive. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher creates a thirst for school improvement that involves every stakeholder. The school's caring and friendly atmosphere creates a positive climate where high-quality learning is promoted and celebrated.

When they enter the Reception class, most children have a range of skills that is lower than expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Pupils make appreciable gains in learning from Reception to the end of Year 2, where standards are now above average in writing, and average in reading and mathematics. This represents excellent progress overall for these pupils. Standards are rising steadily, so that current Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve above average standards in English and mathematics, and average standards in science. Given their individual starting points this represents outstanding achievement. The school is very effective in ensuring that the great majority of its pupils reach beyond their expected levels of attainment. For example, pupils of Black British heritage, those for whom English is an additional language, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities often achieve better than their peers nationally. Standards in writing are improving rapidly because the school has taken robust and decisive action to address inconsistencies in teaching, including the introduction of the 'Big Write' initiative. Pupils' skills and enthusiasm for writing are now consistently applied across the curriculum so that their learning is greatly improved and the quality of their work is enhanced appreciably. The school's systems to track individual progress are detailed and focused. Consequently, when individual pupils underachieve, this is speedily recognised and effective intervention activities are swiftly introduced to help them make up for lost ground. In recent times, the school recognised that pupils' achievement in mathematics was lagging behind that in English and science. Robust action to improve assessment, teaching and resources, has now accelerated progress in mathematics to inspiring levels.

Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school and their attendance is outstanding. Relationships are excellent, and pupils respond in an exemplary way to the good teaching that they experience in most lessons. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that pupils' needs are fully met and, consequently, the pupils make great strides in their learning. Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning, as well as their excellent behaviour, boost the impact of the effective teaching. Pupils' personal development and well-being are given a high priority in all aspects of school life and are outstanding. They have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and how to stay safe. Pupils take a good level of physical exercise and many participate in a broad range of extra-curricular activities. The enthusiastic school council plays an important part in shaping the future of the school and takes its responsibilities very seriously. School councillors have adapted parts of the school improvement plan to help pupils understand how the school aims to improve further. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' development are outstanding. The school's Christian ethos permeates through to every aspect of school life, and everyone contributes very positively to supporting the school and its wider community. One parent said, 'We're really a family.' An innovative parent council acts as a very effective sounding board for new ideas and as a critical friend to the school's leadership. Pupils are very

well prepared for their future adult lives because they are developing excellent attitudes to learning alongside the key skills required to live in the 21st century.

The curriculum is vibrant and exciting. School displays are stunning and celebrate beautifully the work of all pupils. Pupils show evident pride in their work and value the opportunities that the stimulating curriculum offers. As one pupil said, 'I really love history now, because it is so interesting.' The curriculum is well adapted to pupils' learning needs and so motivates them to do the best they can. There is an excellent range of enrichment activities, both within the school day and beyond. Educational visits are used judiciously to complement and enhance learning. Strong links are forged across the curriculum, and the creativity coordinators play a key role in ensuring that curriculum diversity is not achieved at the expense of quality. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. Very focused intervention and support by a skilful team of teaching assistants enables pupils to achieve as well as they can. The work of the learning mentor has had a profound and lasting impact on individual pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Consequently, care and support are outstanding. In meeting all its safeguarding responsibilities the school acts with vigour, and arrangements for child protection are robust. Within this very positive picture, teachers' marking, and their guidance to pupils on how to take the next step in their learning, are inconsistent. There is some variability in the degree to which pupils know their targets for improvement and in the quality of teachers' marking.

Parents are extremely happy with the school. One wrote, 'We have seen our children progress so much since being at St Mary Magdalene.' The headteacher has created a very clear vision for the school, based on developing the whole child. Every stakeholder shares this vision. She is very ably supported by her assistant headteachers and subject leaders. Effective systems for monitoring and self-evaluation involve leaders at all levels, are seamless, and provide a strong foundation in the fervent drive for improvement. This drive is continuing to deliver improved standards and increased achievement for pupils. Governors are enthusiastic, committed and very well informed. They play a formative role in the strategic development of the school and provide focused challenge to the school's leadership. The school accepts its community responsibilities, both at local and global levels, with considerable energy, celebrating not only the cultural diversity present locally but that found throughout the world. With improving standards, strong achievement and outstanding leadership at all levels, the school has an excellent capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents praise the progress their children have made in the Reception class. One parent said, 'She talks constantly about what they are doing in school. She teaches us what she learns.' Children learn at a fast pace in Reception and make good progress. They make impressive progress in communication and literacy because outstanding teaching is keenly targeted on improving children's language skills. Progress in mathematical development is satisfactory because it is given less priority than literacy. Children's progress in personal development is excellent because of the exciting curriculum that includes many opportunities to discuss, share and explore for themselves. Lessons are fun and are skilfully planned to meet each child's needs and interests. Seized opportunities, such as investigating 'freezing' in cold weather, make the curriculum even more relevant. Children develop independence, for example by registering themselves at the start of the day, and helping to tidy. They enjoy learning, and quickly make excellent relationships with adults and other children. Their behaviour is excellent because of outstanding classroom management and high expectations. Safeguarding is robust, and children

learn how to look after themselves very well. There is excellent inclusive provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and staff identify any extra needs very promptly and give extra specialist help. However, some opportunities are missed to reflect the many cultures in the classroom through displays, the use of resources and in celebrating the children's heritage. The leadership and management of the EYFS are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and consistency of teachers' marking so that pupils receive regular and focused guidance on how 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?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

03 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary Magdalene Church of England Primary School, London, SE15 3RA

You will remember that we visited your school recently for one day. I am writing, on behalf of both inspectors, to tell you what we found out about your school. We would like to thank you for making us feel very welcome and for talking to us about your school. We were very impressed with the comments you made. It is very clear that you think very highly of your school and that you enjoy your learning enormously.

Your school is outstanding. We think that it has several special qualities, including the following.

- You make excellent progress through the school, and achieve above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- The school has an outstanding headteacher who is very well supported by all the staff and the whole school community.
- Your behaviour, attendance and enthusiasm for learning are excellent.
- Your outstanding attitudes help the teachers to make lessons stimulating and rewarding.
- Your school provides you with lots of very interesting and exciting things to do, including after-school clubs, arts activities and visits.
- The school helps to develop you into courteous, considerate and motivated young people.
- This is a very happy school, and your parents and carers speak very highly of it.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to improve your outstanding school even more by:

- making sure that teachers' marking always gives you helpful tips on making the next step in your learning.

We ask you to continue to work hard and carry on playing your part in helping the staff and governors to make St Mary Magdalene a school of which you can continue to be justly proud.

Yours faithfully

Gordon Ewing

Lead Inspector