

SS John and Monica Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103478
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323837
Inspection date	23 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

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)	173
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	30
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marie O'Halloran
Headteacher	Eileen Walker
Date of previous school inspection	26 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Chantry Road Moseley Birmingham B13 8DW
Telephone number	01214 645868

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	23 September 2008
Inspection number	323837

Fax number

01214 645046

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	23 September 2008
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Introduction

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

The progress of different ability groups in Reception and in each key stage

The balance of the curriculum in developing a range of essential skills

The effectiveness of school leaders in using self-evaluation to identify key areas for improvement and in sustaining and improving performance.

Evidence was gathered from analysis of school data, the previous inspection report, pupils' work, parents' questionnaires, school policies and other documents. Lessons were observed and discussions were held with pupils, senior staff, the chair of governors and the local authority adviser. 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

SS John and Monica provides for pupils from a wide range of ethnic groups, the majority of whom are Asian, particularly Pakistani. There is a small minority of Black and White British pupils. The school is in a socially mixed area, although a very high proportion of pupils are not fluent in English when they join the school. Although the school is Catholic the religious backgrounds of the pupils are very mixed, representing many faiths. There is Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision comprising one Reception class.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

SS John and Monica is an outstanding school. It is a haven of very happy, busy pupils who are keenly focused on the business of learning. When children join Reception their attainment is usually below that expected for their age, with significant difficulties in language and literacy skills. The school is very effective in helping pupils overcome this barrier, so that by the time they leave the standard of their work has risen to above national averages, showing excellent progress and achievement. A highly skilled leadership team has taken the school through a period of change, significantly improving the practice of teaching and broadening the curriculum, whilst maintaining the exceptionally good progress pupils make. This progress is evident not only in subjects such as English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT) but also in their excellent personal development.

Pupils really enjoy school, one typically describing it as the 'best school in the world because the teachers are so kind and they make lessons fun'. Parents of many different faiths choose the school, not only for its high quality, but often for its religious nature and for the very strong moral and spiritual guidance so apparent in the excellent conduct of the pupils. They are very pleased with all aspects of the school, especially the evident improvements and the increasing range of activities. As one commented, 'The school benefits from having good teaching staff, who are passionate about what they do.' Outstanding care and support for pupils includes robust systems for safeguarding them, a thriving breakfast club and extensive links with other agencies.

Rapid progress is evident for pupils of all abilities, including those who find learning difficult. Very thorough guidance, based upon regular monitoring, ensures that no pupil is left behind. Progress is generally good for pupils in Reception and Key Stage 1, and outstanding in Key Stage 2, reflecting outstanding teaching overall, especially for the older pupils. Teaching assistants contribute substantially to this work. A very well organised target setting system ensures that pupils understand what they must do to improve. Teachers thoroughly assess each individual's precise level of attainment so that lessons meet their different needs. Teachers are increasingly using a wide variety of activities and strategies in lessons to keep pupils highly motivated. In one very imaginative lesson, for example, pupils worked in groups to generate phrases for written dialogue. Their approach was mature, yet lively, and they were confident enough to take risks in putting forward their ideas.

Pupils say they enjoy many subjects, finding them all interesting and stimulating. Despite this, attendance is currently only satisfactory, although the school has good procedures for increasing attendance and is arranging more support for the high number of parents who take their children on holiday during term time. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep safe and stay healthy, as demonstrated by their outstandingly good behaviour and their enthusiasm for the fruit and daily exercise they take. Pupils contribute well to the school and wider community and are enthusiastic about the help they give to each other. Older pupils help organise games in the playground, for example, and younger ones help with reading in the Reception class. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a very high quality, with a deep understanding and tolerance of others' views, cultures and beliefs. The good curriculum is strongly and effectively focused on the key skills of literacy and numeracy, balanced by a suitable range of other experiences. These include many sports, extensive personal and social education and some excellent work in the humanities. Quite a few pupils learn a musical instrument, alongside various visits, performances and themed days. This all helps to prepare

pupils exceptionally well for their future lives and to live harmoniously in a multicultural community. However, school leaders have rightly identified that creative aspects of the curriculum, although satisfactory and much improved, are still underdeveloped. Whereas many subjects support core skills, there is relatively less focus on using the creative arts and design and technology to enhance learning. This limits the opportunities for pupils to develop further their creative approaches to learning. School leaders have established an outstanding system for assessing and monitoring how well each pupil is doing. Expectations are aspirational. As soon as a relative weakness becomes evident within a subject, age or ability group it is addressed and so standards are kept very high. The capacity to improve is excellent. The progress of different ethnic groups and of boys and girls is also carefully monitored to ensure that each and every pupil has the same opportunities to shine. High quality self-evaluation has led to many improvements, such as increasing standards in Key Stage 1 and substantially improving the school environment. This is very attractive, with a host of interesting features such as the forest, trim trail and an exciting stairwell mural.

The wide range of high quality skills pupils develop prepare them very well for the next stage of their education. Not only are they very well grounded in basic skills and ICT, but they also show high levels of competency in discussion, working in groups and organising events such as running the book fair.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Reception class is good. Teaching and learning and the progress children make are good and they are very well cared for. This means that despite the low level of some children's skills, especially language skills on entry, they broadly meet national expectations in the areas of learning by the end of Reception. During the inspection, although children were new to the school they were already beginning to learn how to take turns and not call out, responding well to the very successful early emphasis on developing social and personal skills.

There is an extensive programme of phonics teaching and guided reading, and very well planned opportunities are provided for encouraging speaking in every activity. This means that children quickly develop essential language skills from the very beginning. Teaching assistants skilfully support this work. During one morning, children particularly enjoyed the number rhymes and doing the 'Hokey Cokey,' which provided some lively and fun-filled learning. The atmosphere in the Reception class is not only enjoyable but is also very supportive, with carefully crafted targets to meet children's individual needs. Relationships between children and with staff are very positive and there is a good balance of adult- and child-led activities covering all the areas of learning. The access to outside is, however, restricted by steep steps. The staff make very good use of this space, but spontaneous flow between inside and outside is inhibited. Children have to wait for set times to go out, so that staff can escort them, reducing opportunities to further enhance the activities and learning provided.

Good leadership and management have resulted in continuous improvement, most recently with the quality of writing but also in the beautiful new outside area. Thorough monitoring and assessment provides the overview to ensure that activities are tailored to suit children's often very different levels of development.

What the school should do to improve further

- What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the curriculum provides sufficient creative experiences for pupils in a wider range of subjects.
- Improve access from the Reception class to the outside so that activities can flow more freely between the two.

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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	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
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

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	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**

24 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of SS John and Monica Catholic Primary School, Birmingham, B13 8DW

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons.

Your school is very special. It is an outstanding school, with many excellent things going on, just as you described. Exceptionally good teaching helps you to make outstanding progress in your lessons, and in your social and personal skills. You do very well in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Those of you in Reception make good progress and we like the way you have learned how to take turns so quickly. We have asked your teachers to help you to work and play outside more in the future.

Staff and governors work hard to keep improving the school. For this reason, every year shows the same excellent progress being made and the standards you reach lower down in the school are rising. We like the way you really enjoy your lessons and always try to do your best.

Your teachers see to it that you have a good range of activities to help you learn. These help you develop excellent social and basic skills, with plenty of opportunities to appreciate and respect each other's way of life. We have, however, asked your teachers to plan more creative activities for you, for example using art, drama and musical performances. We are sure that you will discuss this with your teachers and help them by sharing your ideas.

You were keen to tell us that the school also keeps you safe and looks after you very well. It is therefore very pleasing to see that you are helping yourselves by taking plenty of exercise and eating such a healthy diet. Your behaviour is also excellent, especially in the way you value learning.

We are also impressed with the responsibilities that you take on within the school and how much help you give to others. You clearly really enjoy coming to school. We think that this, alongside your high quality basic skills and excellent skills in working together, will help prepare you very well for your next school and future lives.

Yours faithfully

Patricia Potheary Lead inspector