

St Mary's Priory RC Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102147
Local Authority	Haringey
Inspection number	286288
Inspection dates	20 - 21 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Mr Alan Frith

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of School	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Hibbert
Headteacher	Mrs F Collins
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2001
School address	Hermitage Road Tottenham London N15 5RE
Telephone number	020 8800 9229
Fax number	020 8800 1375

Age group	3-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, as part of a co-ordinated inspection with the neighbouring junior school.

Description of the school

This is a Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided infant school whose trustees are the Servite Sisters. It is of average size and became part of a federation with its neighbouring junior school in September 2006. At that time, the head of the junior school was appointed head of the infant school as well. It is situated in a socially and economically deprived area and the number of pupils entitled to free school meals is twice the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is very high, as is the number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. There are above average numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, but only a few have a statement of educational need.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school has improved steadily since the previous inspection and provides an outstanding education for all its pupils. The arrangements to form a federation with the junior school have been very effective. Under the excellent direction of its new headteacher, the school has continued to improve and standards have gone up. Results in 2007 are the best ever obtained. Standards are broadly average overall and this year, for the first time, test results in reading and mathematics are higher than recent national average figures. Given the pupils' starting points, this represents outstanding achievement.

When they start school most pupils face significant barriers, which can make learning difficult for them. The school has worked very successfully to gain the trust of parents, who are highly motivated and successfully involved in helping their children succeed. Pupils overcome the barriers quickly as they gain confidence in the use of English and aim high. One parent said, 'My daughter loves going to school and we enjoy being involved in the activities that the school organises.'

The school has a strong tradition of increasing pupils' self-confidence by providing constant praise and encouragement. Based on the school's Catholic ethos, it has at its centre a firm commitment to look after one another. As a result, the pupils learn to relate very well with each other, as well as with all the school staff, and their personal development is outstanding.

Other features of the school also contribute to the pupils' excellent progress. Teaching is consistently good. Subject leaders hold regular discussions with class teachers to track and monitor the achievement levels of individual pupils and this works very well in improving performance. Pupils gain an excellent start when they enter the Foundation Stage, where every aspect, including teaching, is outstanding, and progress is rapid.

Teachers plan lessons well and receive good support from the teaching assistants, who are well informed and experienced. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent and classroom resources and displays are used well. The curriculum is good, focussing on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Sometimes teachers miss opportunities to challenge pupils and occasionally they provide too much information, without waiting to see if pupils can produce it themselves. They do not always make the purpose of activities clear to individual pupils.

The federation has had an immediate positive impact because leadership and management at all levels are excellent. Even in this, its first year, the headteacher and the deputies have enabled each school to benefit from the other's strengths.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching, particularly through promoting further challenge for pupils by making it clear what is expected of

them as individuals.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards have risen since the previous inspection. In 2002 and 2003, attainment at the end of Year 2 was significantly below average. However, in the next three years standards started to rise and came close to the national average. In 2007 they have again risen significantly, especially in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing have also risen this year and are equal to last year's national average. Overall, girls' results are a little better than boys, but this is in line with national trends and the progress they make is similar.

When children enter the Foundation Stage the levels of their skills and knowledge are generally much lower than those expected for that age and most find it hard to use English to communicate. The progress they make is outstanding, especially in social development and in communication, language and literacy skills. In both of these areas, most reach the Early Learning Goals. The rising standards in Year 2 are due mainly to this excellent start and represent outstanding achievement. Pupils receive expert support with English as an additional language throughout their time at the school, promoting continued swift progress. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities also make excellent progress, as a result of the high quality of the close attention and support they receive. The great majority of pupils manage to overcome disadvantage and achieve outstandingly well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. They gain from the Catholic ethos of the school, learning to respect the values and beliefs of others. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong and settle quickly to their work, maintaining high levels of concentration. Behaviour in lessons and the playground is outstanding. Attendance has improved this year and is now good.

Pupils love coming to school and demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. They adopt safe practices and understand the importance of healthy lifestyles. For example, they make a real contribution to the protection of the environment by walking to school on Wednesdays, an initiative they not only support, but also positively enjoy. They choose healthy options for lunch and fully understand the value of regular exercise. They develop a strong sense of responsibility for others and listen to the views of others before reaching a consensus. This is reflected in their enthusiasm for the work of the school council and the newly formed 'Eco School' group. They develop a sense of community through fundraising activities, visits from members of the local community and involvement in events such as the Tottenham Festival. The acquisition of satisfactory basic skills by the end of Year 2, combined with excellent team-working and cooperative skills, prepares them well for later life.

The Foundation Stage gives pupils an excellent start, integrating them into school routines and identifying social and emotional needs very early, making them feel safe and confident. They quickly learn to enjoy school and make exemplary progress in acquiring personal and social skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good, with several strengths, and it is outstanding in the Foundation Stage. Clear and consistent planning in the Foundation Stage ensures that the learning needs of all children are met. Excellent use of resources and role play techniques mean that children make very good progress in all areas. Children's independent learning skills and personal and social skills are developed very effectively. The deployment of teaching assistants and specialist teachers of English as an additional language is very effective. For example, the support for higher attaining children enables them to make very quick progress with literacy. In Years 1 and 2 also, pupils are proud of being able to support and help each other in lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants provide an endless supply of warmth and support, constantly boosting the children's sense of self-esteem by praising every little step forward. The role of teaching assistants is particularly effective because they contribute to the preparation of lessons. There are few weaknesses in the teaching in Years 1 and 2. The main ones are that teachers sometimes give pupils too much help and do not explain to individual pupils what each one of them should achieve. This reduces the level of challenge and stops them extending themselves as much as they should. Pupils love being praised and they respond well, but sometimes teachers do not expect enough before telling them how well they have done.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum is good, with a strong focus on developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills effectively. Specialist teaching of music enhances the provision well and programmes, such as the 'Nurture Group', support pupils with the social and emotional aspects of learning. Good use is made of school trips, for example, a visit to the local museum linked to pupils' work in history. Links between these subjects and English and mathematics have not been fully developed. However, the school has recently improved the management of subjects such as history and geography and plans to do the same with other subjects, by benefiting from the expertise of subject leaders in the junior school. Planning and monitoring of the Foundation Stage curriculum are outstanding. Children develop their communication, emotional and social skills very well, learning to express and share their views and displaying high levels of confidence and self-esteem.

The majority of pupils take up learning opportunities offered outside the school day and speak enthusiastically about them. The site manager develops and cares for the school grounds expertly and is fully involved in many activities, including clubs which take place after school. Children are delighted with recent improvements to the school environment and speak with pleasure about the plans for new facilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care and support for pupils is outstanding. The overwhelming majority of parents are quick to praise the school in this respect. One parent said it is 'an excellent school with great staff who really look after the children.' Pupils also express confidence and say they have an adult to talk with should they feel the need to discuss personal matters. All health and safety matters are dealt with very effectively, risk assessments are in place and child protection procedures are well established. The school works extremely well with parents, volunteers, learning mentors and a variety of external agencies to support all children, including those most at risk. The tracking of pupils' progress is excellent. Subject leaders for English and mathematics hold 'pupil progress meetings' regularly with each class teacher. In this way, the school sees how many levels of progress each child is making each term, so that teachers can respond if anyone is not moving forward as well as they should. This system, recently adopted from the junior school, has contributed to the outstanding progress made by pupils currently in Year 2. Provision for nurturing the children in the Foundation Stage is exemplary. Excellent relationships with parents and excellent induction procedures ensure that children grow up in a very caring learning environment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are excellent at all levels. The headteacher has communicated a very clear vision to all staff. Everyone in a management role conveys the strong community ethos of the school very successfully. Highly experienced governors know the school thoroughly and provide both support and challenge. Together, they have created an atmosphere, which is not only happy and caring, but also ambitious. Subject leaders are assiduous in their efforts to improve teachers' practice and in the records they keep of monitoring and of children's progress. The development plan is very well written and all staff are clear about their role. In spite of the excellent monitoring and evaluation, the senior staff underestimated the school's strengths when preparing their self-evaluation for the inspection. They were over-modest, judging most aspects of the school as good.

The senior teams have managed the process of forming the federation very well indeed. There is a plan to make the links stronger year by year and the effects can already be felt in both schools. For example, in the peer mediation scheme, pupils in Year 6 provide models for those in Year 2 to emulate. Specialist staff in the junior school have started to work with their counterparts in the infants, to improve subject leadership, and one of the nursery teachers runs a successful football club for girls in Years 5 and 6.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

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 interest 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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	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

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

3 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Mary's Priory RC Infant School, London, N15 5RE

Thank you very much for the warm, friendly and enthusiastic welcome you gave us when we visited recently. Thank you also for talking to us in such a lively way. Your participation helped us greatly with the inspection.

We judged your school to be excellent. We were delighted to see how quickly you make progress and how very well you get on with each other. Your personal and social skills are very good indeed. This year more pupils in Year 2 have reached higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics than ever before. You are lucky to have so many good opportunities to learn and such an excellent level of care from your teachers. The headteacher and the senior staff lead and manage the school outstandingly well. It is also wonderful to see the excellent support your parents provide for you and for the school.

Even very good schools can get better. We have asked the school to make teaching even better so that it stretches every one of you in all your lessons.

My colleague and I wish you all great success in the future.

With best wishes,

Alan Frith
Lead inspector

