

St John's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100953
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	307535
Inspection dates	31 January –1 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Sudworth

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	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stephan Breban
Headteacher	Mrs Fiona Singleton
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2003
School address	Peel Grove Bethnal Green London E2 9LR
Telephone number	020 8980 1142
Fax number	020 8983 6112

Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most children begin the Nursery full-time at age three in this oversubscribed one-form entry school. Almost all continue into the Reception class. Just over one-third of the pupils speak a language other than English as their first language. Those at an early stage of learning the language are mainly in the Foundation Stage. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is just above the national average. The school serves a community that contains areas of high deprivation, and just over half the pupils are entitled to free school meals. Bangladeshi pupils form the most numerous group of pupils in this school, which draws its pupils from many different ethnic backgrounds and cultures. The headteacher has just started her second year in post. The school had had five headteachers in the previous five years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St John's CofE Primary School is an improving school and provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Under the good leadership of its headteacher, and supported effectively by senior staff, the school is making good strides forward, for example in teamwork and pupils' good behaviour. Although the recent improvements cannot yet be seen fully in improved results, there is a definite upturn in pupils' progress and in their understanding. Pupils achieve satisfactorily. This is a happy school at the heart of the community where all staff, from the classrooms to the kitchen, work enthusiastically for the good of the pupils. They are also mindful of the wider community. Sessions for parents and others, for example, help them to gain skills in English, in computer literacy or in aspects of health and bring the wider ethnically diverse community together. As a result, parents' confidence in the school has increased.

Pupils' personal development is now a significant strength in the school. Pupils respect their teachers and one another. Their attitudes to learning are good and they have high ambitions for their futures. Results of national assessments are broadly average. Curriculum organisation is satisfactory, including that in the Foundation Stage, although provision for outside learning opportunities in the Reception class is limited. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy living and engage well in the extra opportunities for sport. Pupils understand matters that affect their personal safety. They engage well with the community. Their enjoyment of school is very apparent. They are being soundly prepared for their futures.

A big majority of parents are happy with the school and are pleased with their children's progress. One parent speaks for many and writes: 'We have found that the teachers at St John's are very caring and attentive. In addition to teaching our children well, they have also taken the time to get to know our children.' The care of the pupils, including pastoral oversight, is a significant strength. The school has good links with the church. It also employs professional help to assist pupils with particular learning and emotional needs. Academic guidance for pupils is more variable. While there is some good practice, for example in marking, there is not yet a consistency in helping pupils to understand how they can improve their work and what they need to do to get to the next level.

Regular changes of headteachers have impeded the school's continuous development including systems to monitor teaching. At the moment, staff are not given enough feedback about their performance to help them improve their teaching in different subjects. Now that there is greater stability among the staff, the school is keen to extend the monitoring of teaching to include subject leaders. This is designed to raise attainment further and teaching quality, where the range in quality is still too great, although it is satisfactory overall. This is a school with a sound capacity for further improvement given that it is recovering from difficult times. Its determination to improve even more is clearly apparent.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children's attainment on entry to the Nursery is low because several children have limited skills in English. Full-time education from age three enables them to make good progress in learning English. Children's attainment by the start of Reception is often close to national expectations but, over time, progress and attainment have been inconsistent in the Reception class. In 2007, most children reached expectations for the start of Year 1. Teaching is satisfactory, overall, but

often good when staff teach groups. Reception children made pizzas and predicted what they would look like when they came out of the oven. They make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage but achieve better in the Nursery. This is because the environment is far more spacious than the Reception class and affords greater flexibility for arranging quality learning opportunities. For example, opportunities to learn from the outside environment are good in the Nursery. They are more limited in the Reception class because outside equipment is sparse and so the outside learning environment does not provide enough stimulation.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop senior and subject leaders' monitoring and evaluation skills so they can help their colleagues improve their teaching skills further and so raise standards even more.
- Help pupils to know more clearly how to improve their work and what they need to do to get to the next level.
- Develop the outside learning environment for the Reception class so that the children can enjoy a greater range of activities.

A small number of 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 visit.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They make satisfactory progress and reach broadly average standards overall, although attainment in English is higher than in mathematics. Deficiencies in how the mathematics curriculum was organised in previous years in Key Stage 2 meant that several pupils had gaps in their mathematical knowledge. Grouping within classes is leading to a better grasp of mathematical concepts. In 2007, Year 6 pupils reached an above average standard in English. Results in Year 2 had been falling due to staffing problems but pupils are now making better progress because of very effective teaching in Years 1 and 2.

Pupils who have difficulties in reading and writing gain in confidence and are making increasing gains in their progress because of the new materials being used and the effective deployment of staff. However, White British pupils have not been attaining as well as other pupils, reflecting the national trend for these pupils in similar areas. Of the most numerous ethnic groups, Caribbean pupils have made best progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well and show good levels of respect for one another. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils say: 'We get along no matter what religion or culture and include all together.' They understand and practise healthy life styles, suggest healthy menus for the kitchen and engage in lots of exercise. They have the confidence to seek staff support if they have a problem. They are developing a good awareness of fair trade, and the need to respect the environment. Attendance is below the national average but the school is working hard to improve this. The school council has made good suggestions to improve the school, such as lunchtime provision. Pupils engage well with the community, for example singing to the elderly, and enjoy the learning partnership with the law firm, which is the school's business partner.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers conduct lessons in a calm, working atmosphere, which promotes a clear focus on learning. Teachers generally prepare lessons well but vary widely in their skills to excite the pupils when they discuss learning. Their proficiency in using modern technology to present lessons is growing. Planning for pupils with different needs, such as able pupils, is improving and the recent strategy of deploying the inclusion manager full-time across the school has improved the teaching of pupils who have difficulty in reading and writing. This teaching is often thoughtful and well matched to pupils' particular needs. Teachers deploy teaching assistants effectively, especially with these pupils. Teaching is currently strongest in Key Stage 1. Overall, it is satisfactory because the range in quality is still too great. It is occasionally good in Years 3 to 6. An over-use of worksheets in some classes restricts opportunities for pupils to use their developing skills in literacy and numeracy in subjects such as science and the humanities. Marking is up to date and frequently helpful to pupils in making improvements.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Visits support the curriculum well and enhance pupils' understanding, as when they visit museums to support history studies. The provision for personal, social and health education is good and helps pupils to develop socially and emotionally and to understand healthy and safe living. Pupils' attendance at the many extra-curricular activities is good. They have many opportunities in sport. Visitors to the school, such as drama groups and artists, support the curriculum breadth. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is improving and there is satisfactory use of ICT in other subjects. However, many pupils have not yet had opportunities to use a range of equipment in ICT across the curriculum. The school recognises that the curriculum could be more creative and exciting by making better links between different subjects. There is good provision for pupils who find learning difficult. Provision for pupils who show particular talent is satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good. Links with different professional agencies are effective in obtaining help for different pupils' needs. These links also support families. The school gives good attention to matters affecting the pupils' health and safety. Child protection arrangements are secure. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties receive the good support of a trained therapist. The school works well with parents. The home-school liaison officer does effective work with them in raising their awareness of various matters, including how they can support their children academically.

The school is becoming more effective in monitoring pupils' progress and taking appropriate action on its findings. Its analysis and use of data are improving. However, teachers do not yet consistently help pupils to know how they can improve and how they can get to the next level of learning. The setting of individual targets for pupils and helping them to evaluate their own work is inconsistent across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, supported effectively by the deputy headteacher, provides good leadership. They work closely together, providing a good model of teamwork. They have sharpened the focus on raising standards and the quality of teaching and learning, although this does not yet fully include all subject leaders. There is a clear sense of purpose and a quest for further improvement. The good team spirit that they have created is permeating the school.

The school improvement plan provides a good steer for future development and includes the correct priorities. It is being used effectively to manage the provision and drive up pupils' rates of progress. School self-evaluation is satisfactory. The re-organisation of subject leaders' responsibilities has not yet permitted opportunities for them all to draw out strengths and aspects for development in their areas of responsibility.

The work of the governing body is satisfactory. Governors fulfil their statutory duties, are supportive of the school and are eager to contribute. However, the governing body does not yet gain a thorough insight to challenge the school effectively. The school has built up a large financial surplus due to insecurities in past financial management, but new leadership has brought about greater financial rigour and there is a clear plan to use the surplus for the pupils' benefit.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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?	3

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?	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	3
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	3
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

14 February 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St John's Church of England Primary School, London, E2 9LR

Thank you for welcoming us to your school when we visited. We really enjoyed meeting you and learning about your activities. You clearly enjoy school. We were very pleased with the way that you are growing up as young people. You show much respect for adults in the school and have good relationships with one another. Your behaviour is good and you show a lot of interest in your work. Under the good leadership of Mrs Singleton and with help from other staff, your school is showing clear signs of improvement and provides you with a satisfactory education. The staff look after you very well.

You are making satisfactory progress in your work and reaching standards that are around those expected, but your progress in the main has been better in English than in mathematics. The school realises this and has changed the teaching arrangements in mathematics in Years 3 to 6. The new arrangements are working much better.

In order to improve the school further, we have asked the staff to make more visits to one another's lessons so that they can help each other to improve the rate of progress that you are making and to help you to reach an even higher standard of work. We hope that this will also help to improve further the quality of teaching. We have also asked the teachers to give you more information about how you can improve your work and get to the next level. Reception children do not have enough opportunities to learn from the outdoors and we have asked the school to attend to this.

We hope that you will continue to work hard and that you will fulfil your ambitions that you shared with us.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Sudworth

Lead inspector