

The Annunciation RC Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101330
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	323450
Inspection date	24 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Jarvis

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	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	214
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 Luigi Grasso
Headteacher	Miss Teresa Lynch
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Thirleby Road Edgware HA8 0HQ
Telephone number	020 8959 2325
Fax number	020 8906 4116

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

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

- what factors help pupils to do as well as they do both academically and personally
- how well the school promotes community cohesion
- how good achievement and provision are in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially the curriculum.

Evidence was gathered from an analysis of pupils' test results, current assessment and tracking data, and observation of lessons. Parent questionnaires, discussions with the headteacher, senior staff, governors and pupils also contributed to the judgements. 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 in the report where appropriate.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized infant school. Nearly all pupils are Roman Catholic. Pupil mobility is low and there is an experienced and stable teaching force. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is average, as is that of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with speech and language needs predominating. Most pupils come from minority ethnic groups, the largest ethnic groups being Black African, with growing numbers from Eastern European backgrounds. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a part-time Nursery and two Reception classes. Over recent years, the proportion of children starting school with speech and language difficulties or at an early stage of learning English has been increasing.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which has sustained its exceptional quality of work over many years. The vast majority of parents are overwhelmingly positive about it. Typically, they wrote, 'Annunciation is a fantastic school and run extremely well,' 'My son has made great progress' and 'Discipline is excellent and there is a very strong focus on the Catholic faith, both of which I like.' Pupils are extremely happy at school and every child is made to feel valued and encouraged to do their very best.

Fundamental to the school's success is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, with the very strong support of other staff and governors. They are highly committed to building on the very strong foundations which have been laid over a number of years. They know what makes their school tick. Very good monitoring ensures that provision is kept in tip-top condition and ensures that pupils do extremely well both academically and personally. There is no complacency. New initiatives are adopted only if they are right for the school, if they fit in with existing practice and will be beneficial. This means that some external proposals are rejected but others, such as the PE School Sports and Young People (PESSYP) programme to boost physical education, have been taken on with relish. This has already boosted pupils' enjoyment and ensured that they have a very strongly developed awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles. The sustained performance of the school over many years and its continual honing of practice reflect its outstanding capacity to sustain improvement.

Subject leaders fulfil their roles extremely well. They say, 'We work as a unit and we all know what we are doing.' A key reason why their leadership and management are so very good is that they have been encouraged to take responsibility and to focus their expertise and interests on ensuring that pupils do as well as possible. They look at one or two areas for development each year. This helps to concentrate their work and ensure that improvements have time to be implemented very effectively. In science, for example, pupils make rapid progress because of the way the subject leader has guided other staff to encourage pupils to work more independently, make their own enquiries and produce high-quality scientific writing.

Given this very good oversight, it is no wonder that, from starting points that are below expectations overall on entry, pupils' achievement is excellent. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been well above average for many years. In the latest Year 2 assessments, standards were exceptionally high in reading and well above average in writing and science. An above-average proportion of pupils exceeded the expected level in all three subjects. Standards in reading remain impressive. This is a result of the sharp focus on reading, parents' very good help in encouraging their children to read at home, and visiting story-tellers and drama groups which help pupils develop a love of reading. Further improvements are expected both in writing as a result of the greater emphasis given to helping pupils make links between letters and sounds, and in mathematics where boys have received more targeted support. Pupils who need extra help with their language or other needs and those who are at an early stage of learning English make excellent progress because they are given plenty of high-quality support. What is particularly noticeable is how very well the increasing numbers of Polish pupils integrate with other pupils, quickly learn English and make rapid strides in their learning. Pupils' excellent achievement is not confined to the 'basics'. They also do very well, for example, in music and in art and information and communication technology, where work on display and in books is of a high standard.

A number of other factors help the pupils achieve such good standards. Teaching is consistently good or better and activities are very well planned to meet the needs of all pupils and match their interests. Teachers have high expectations of the quality of work. Pupils respond by undertaking their work diligently and presenting it very well. Pupils are very clear about what they are learning because teachers make the purpose of each lesson very clear. At the end of lessons pupils are encouraged to assess each other's work and pinpoint what has been done well and what could be better. This works very well and provides a further spur to learning. Marking too is very helpful and consistently very good in quality. It not only provides pupils with a sense of achievement and success but gives them clear points on how to improve their work. For example, in one book the teacher had written, 'A good story. Well Done! Look at how I have used speech marks to show when someone is speaking. Now you try this.' Teachers accurately assess how well each pupil is progressing. The information is used very well to ensure that they reach their challenging targets and that no one slips behind. Adults have high expectations of behaviour in class and around the school. In turn, pupils respond by showing great self-discipline, being calm and having excellent attitudes to learning. The school has very good links with outside agencies which help support pupils who need extra support in their learning. An impressive range of resources has been built up, including books, materials for practical work, computers and music which match the needs of young learners and help to stimulate their interests. Regular visitors, such as Drama 4 All who helped to stimulate an interest in drama, and a company which has worked on mathematical problem solving with Years 1 and 2 pupils, enrich the already very well-tailored curriculum.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding, reflecting the excellent support, care and guidance they receive. Their spiritual, moral and social development is excellent based upon a very strong Christian ethos of respect and care for others. They show a good awareness of other cultures and know what it might be like to live in some different places. Pupils are very respectful of each other's differences and have a strong sense of common values such as tolerance and respect for others who may be different from themselves. As one said, 'We really look out for anyone who is new to our school, make sure they are not worried and make new friends.' They have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe through the work they do in learning about potential dangers in the park, when walking to school, at home, when taking medicine and using computers. The school promotes community cohesion well by fostering a very strong sense of community within the school. Pupils also have good opportunities to participate in community activities, work with pupils in other schools and support a variety of local charities. However, the headteacher is aware that there is scope to involve parents further in the work of the school and to widen pupils' experiences by reaching out even further to all sections of the community.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children thrive in a safe, secure environment where adults know each child very well and work effectively as a team to meet individual needs. Staff plan carefully to ensure a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities so that children enjoy learning and playing in a stimulating environment where they feel valued and where relationships are warm and positive.

Most children start school in the Nursery with skills and abilities that are below those expected for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy. Many of the children are in the early stages of learning English. They make good progress throughout the Nursery and Reception years because they receive consistently good teaching from enthusiastic, committed

staff who are constantly striving to improve. Activities are planned to ensure that children have fun. For example, while planning a bear hunt to follow up reading *We're going on a bear hunt*, one child became so engrossed in the role play that he asked if they were going on a real bear hunt. Achievement in speaking and listening and in reading and writing has been boosted by an increased emphasis on letters and sounds. Children also make particularly good progress in personal, social and emotional development and their behaviour is excellent because adults convey clear, consistent expectations. Children also make good progress in physical development, especially in the Nursery where they benefit from regular access to wheeled toys in the outside play area. There is an extensive range of high-quality resources, and the recently developed outdoor area is used well to promote all aspects of the curriculum; children in Reception would benefit from increased opportunities to learn and play outside. Children are well cared for, and their safety, health and well-being are a priority. The Early Years Foundation Stage team has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement, and is implementing measures to improve consistency in their assessment of children's learning in order to sharpen children's next steps in learning and achievement. Already these are having a good impact but the measures still need time to be fully effective. By the time children enter Year 1, levels of attainment are in line with or above expected levels.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the already good links with parents and forge even wider links with all sections of the community.

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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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
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	2
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?	1
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?	2
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 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Annunciation RC Infant School, Edgware, HA8 0HQ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit. We would like to tell you what we found out. You are very happy at school and you have every right to be because your school is an outstanding school.

Here are some of the really good things we liked most about your school that set it apart from many others.

- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes get off to a good start and settle in very quickly.
- You do much better than many children of your age and reach standards which are well above average by the end of Year 2 in the basic subjects and in others such as music, art, information and communication technology, and physical education. Your standards in reading are particularly impressive.
- Pupils who need extra support are given all the help they need and any pupil who is new to the school settles in very quickly because you help them.
- The teaching is excellent, especially marking and the way teachers make the point of each lesson clear so that you know what you need to achieve.
- You work very hard and your behaviour is excellent. Well done!
- All staff work very hard to make sure it is a lovely place to be in. The resources you have are excellent and help you learn really well.
- Your headteacher and staff have ensured that your school does the very best for you over many years and they are keen for this to continue.

To improve the school even further, I have asked the teachers and governors to further strengthen the links they have forged with parents and the local community.

I wish you best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Alan Jarvis

Lead Inspector