

St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102910
Local Authority	Richmond Upon Thames
Inspection number	323713
Inspection dates	26 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Graham Stephens

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	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Phillip Mathias
Headteacher	Ms Christine Brett
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2006
School address	Queen's Road Richmond TW10 6HN
Telephone number	020 8940 3015
Fax number	020 8332 0986

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

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

- the impact of leadership and management on accelerating achievement and further raising standards in writing
- the consistency of teaching and its impact on learning, especially that of boys, throughout the school
- to check the school's view that there are strengths in pupils' personal development and care, well-being and academic guidance and to confirm that the curriculum now links subjects more effectively together so that pupils have more opportunities to transfer their talents and skills.

Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, sampling pupils' work, discussion with pupils, staff and governors, the school's documentation and assessment information and the inspection questionnaires returned from parents. 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 were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This school is similar in size to other primary schools. It is situated in the Archdiocese of Southwark and serves families from a wide geographical area. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, many of whom find aspects of English and mathematics challenging, is lower than in most schools. Pupils come from mainly White European backgrounds, with close to a quarter having a home language other than English. There is provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is a nursery, not managed by the governing body, on site.

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. Pupils make excellent progress from their starting points in both their academic studies and their personal development and well-being. The vast majority of parents are not only delighted with the all-round progress that their children make, but are also very proactive in their support of the school and all that it does. Inspectors received a vast number of positive comments that touched on all aspects of the school. The outstanding leadership of the long-standing headteacher, very well supported by her deputy, was reflected in many of the comments received, for example: 'No one person makes a school, it has been said. Yet if you ask the hundreds of parents whose children's lives have been touched by the headteacher, you will hear unflinching praise for her commitment to the children and her secure confidence in her staff.'

Pupils have a great time at this school and this is reflected in their above average attendance. The democratically elected school council represents and acts on the views of the pupils well, for example by buying new playground equipment and organising a 'pyjama party' to raise funds for a local hospice. Pupils are able to contribute much to the school and local communities because they are expected to show care, support and compassion, and they do. Consequently, older pupils support and guide younger pupils without being told to and when asked about bullying in school they were incredulous because they said 'it just doesn't happen'. An excellent programme of personal, social and health education ensures that pupils know much about how to stay healthy and remain safe.

Pupils make outstanding academic progress from their starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage and standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are well above average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those with English as an additional language, respond very well to the support they receive; this is shown not only in learning new facts and applying new skills, but also in gaining confidence through understanding that all adults care and are anxious to support and encourage them in any way they can. The school is not complacent and is forever striving to raise standards further. To this end it has introduced new strategies to improve writing throughout the school, especially that of boys. Evidence indicates that this has been successful. As one parent said, 'My child now enjoys writing, which he didn't before.' Encouraged by this success, the school sensibly now plans to introduce similar strategies to raise standards to even higher levels for all pupils in other subjects across the curriculum. Evidence from the initial impact on writing confirms that this is an effective approach to raising standards further.

Pupils relish being at school. They are confident, reflective and very sensitive to the needs of others. Their personal development and well-being are outstanding. Spirituality pervades the school, behaviour is excellent and pupils are steered by a strong moral compass. They have an excellent understanding of other cultures and beliefs and, through the excellent curriculum provision, are gaining a thorough understanding of values, beliefs and traditions in countries around the world. Pupils are highly motivated and cooperate well with each other. They are given opportunities to display their talents to a wider audience, one playing the tin whistle, and another the piano in assembly. Others danced to express the sentiments of a hymn. Teaching is outstanding overall because it is based on planning that ensures that work is well matched to every pupil's needs. Ongoing assessment is a strength, and this is reflected in the copious notes on many plans that reflect the response of individuals and groups to lessons taught and that then guide planning for the next stage of the pupils' learning. Pupils are consistently encouraged to improve, because all adults have very high expectations and are very skilled in asking questions that challenge the pupils to reflect, explain and justify their thinking. The outstanding curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that learning builds well on what pupils know, understand and can do and that opportunities to explore links between subjects are explored. It provides exciting and enjoyable opportunities for pupils to apply and consolidate the skills which they have been taught. The curriculum is very well supported by the use of information and communication technology and pupils naturally turn to computers and use them as tools to support them in their learning.

Teaching assistants, many supporting individual pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are all an integral part of the team. This support, together with very careful planning, excellent support from external agencies, and consistently excellent teaching, ensures that these pupils achieve very well. Procedures to ensure that pupils are well safeguarded are very secure and well known. Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully. An excellent system of ongoing assessment, in which self-evaluation plays a key role, ensures that work is planned precisely to meet individual needs and that excellent progress is maintained.

The headteacher provides very strong leadership. Very well supported by well-informed, proactive and caring governors, she has engendered a very strong team spirit among the well-established staff. The headteacher and her deputy have not only maintained very high standards, but are determined to raise them even further by continuing to accelerate the progress that pupils make. All staff have clear roles and responsibilities and this is reflected in a 'we can do it' attitude that pervades everything they plan and do. They listen carefully to what pupils have to say and take account of their views. They have striven to overcome constraints of space and have created an environment with a very strong ethos for learning, where pupils have the opportunity to excel. Governors are ambitious for the school but firmly focused on the personal, physical and spiritual development of the pupils, as well as their academic progress. They hold the school rigorously to account for the standards it attains and the progress that pupils make. Community cohesion is outstanding. It is carefully structured and is supported by careful curriculum planning. Discussions with pupils confirm that they have a good understanding of their place in the local, wider and global communities, and the need for people of all faiths, cultures and backgrounds to work together whenever possible.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children get off to an excellent start in Reception and most make exemplary progress from starting points broadly in line with expectations for their age in most areas of learning. The weakest area on entry is language and communication. Some children have little or no English on entry, but very effective provision is made for them, and they soon acquire good functional English through the high focus on speaking and listening and effective links with parents. Their attainment when they leave Reception is well above that expected for this age in all areas of learning and above in language and communication. Children's personal development is excellent and contributes to their rapid progress and social skills. The excellent provision made for their welfare means that they settle into school quickly and happily, have very positive relationships with staff, and come to enjoy learning. All were observed as being very excited about their visit to the farm. They talked interestingly about their rich experiences on return: 'We fed the chickens - they're my best animals', said one excitedly. Another added, 'We were towed by a tractor on our ride.' The staff get to know children well and understand their learning and social needs.

Teaching is outstanding and the adults are skilled in helping children to develop their knowledge and understanding. Staff provide a range of exciting things for children to do which engage their interest and enthusiasm. There is a good balance between child-initiated and teacher-led activities. The early introduction of strategies to link sounds and letters prepares them well for learning how to read and write. The provision for children to learn outdoors is good and the main school outdoor areas are well used, for example for a spring walk or in looking for patterns. Outdoor learning is regularly planned as an extension and consolidation to the learning taking place indoors. Children are able to move freely between indoor and outdoor play. Parents are very pleased with the provision and give it their overwhelming support. 'Well structured and nurturing environment,' wrote one, and 'the variety of activities my child does are pretty amazing,' commented another.

Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Assessment of children's progress is carried out methodically and provides an accurate overview of their development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the successful strategies that have been introduced to improve writing, to raise standards even further in other subjects across the curriculum.

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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?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are the children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well 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

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.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

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 interest 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?	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.

09 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School, Richmond, TW10 6HN

It was a delight and a privilege to visit your school. We really enjoyed talking to you all and listened very carefully to all that you had to say.

You go to an outstanding school, and this is why.

- You do very well in your work. You are proud of the things that you do and explained yourselves very clearly.
- You are very polite and caring towards each other. Your behaviour is excellent.
- Your teachers are very good at planning and are always looking for more interesting things to teach you.
- All the adults in your school make sure that you are encouraged, challenged and really well looked after. They are always keen for you to attain even higher standards.

Your headteacher and the other people who help run your school are doing an excellent job. Every school, even one as good as yours, has things that could be improved.

We have asked your teachers to take the methods that have helped so many of you to improve your writing, and use them in other subjects too, so that you will make even better progress and reach even higher standards.

Yours faithfully

Graham Stephens
Lead Inspector