

St Theresa's RC School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101335
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	307655
Inspection dates	16 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Grant
Headteacher	Mr Michael Lyons
Date of previous school inspection	18 April 2005
School address	East End Road Finchley London N3 2TD
Telephone number	020 8346 8826
Fax number	020 8346 0215

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. He evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: what the school is doing to improve the performance of pupils who speak English as an additional language; what opportunities the pupils have to use their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum; the effectiveness of leaders and governors in monitoring the work of the school. The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and parents' questionnaires. Discussions with staff, governors and pupils also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector 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

This average-sized school is situated in a mixed residential area and draws pupils from four local parishes. Almost two thirds of pupils come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. Approaching a fifth of pupils speak an additional language to English, an above average proportion. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is about average. These include speech and language, and moderate learning difficulties. The school is involved in the Comenius Project with other European schools and has an award for promoting physical education. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher was on unexpected sick leave and the deputy was acting head, with another senior teacher taking the role of acting deputy.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that provides an effective education for all its pupils. The acting headteacher has done very well in difficult circumstances to maintain the school's momentum of improvement. She is ably supported by the acting deputy and together they have kept staff morale high and enriched the school's distinctive character. This was summed up by a parent, speaking for many, who wrote, 'Throughout the school there is an atmosphere of calm and caring, promoted at every turn by the staff.'

Children enter the Reception class with a wide range of attainment that overall is broadly as expected. Pupils leave Year 6 with standards that are above average in English, mathematics and science, and this has been the case consistently over many years. The teaching is good and ensures that all pupils achieve well, including those who speak English as an additional language. Results in Year 2 last year were below average, a consequence of an unusually high number of pupils in the cohort with English as an additional language and learning difficulties, and a group of pupils new to the school. Current standards in Year 2 are broadly average, representing good progress for another relatively weaker cohort. Pupils make good progress in Years 3 to 6, with a good curriculum that supports their learning well.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding, together with their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's Christian values underpin all its work, and give pupils a firm foundation built upon respect and serving others. Their behaviour is excellent, and they are especially considerate towards one another, saying they feel free from bullying and harassment. One pupil said, 'If you want to join in with another person's game they'll let you.' The older pupils support the younger ones, and help out in the playground. A parent commented, 'You have only to witness the smallest Reception child's face light up, when a Year 6 monitor takes their hand and runs to help them up from a playground trouble, to know what a very special environment St Theresa's offers.' The school council works hard to improve the environment for pupils, and has helped to set up a memorial garden for a pupil who died, as well as introducing 'no large ball days' when pupils have a good selection of other equipment to play with. Each class nominates its own charity and raises money to support it. Pupils really love school, and attendance is above average. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and keep safe, aided by visits from outside agencies, for example the Life Education Van. They leave the school with a good set of basic skills, well prepared for secondary school.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of what pupils can do and achieve. They make lessons interesting by using a good variety of different strategies. There is an emphasis on speaking and listening, and this supports all pupils well, but particularly those who speak English as an additional language. Teachers use technology effectively to engage pupils. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, especially when working with groups. Occasionally, the pace of the lesson slows down when the introduction goes on too long. While most of the teaching challenges pupils well, sometimes the work is not matched sufficiently to pupils' abilities so that they do not progress as well as they could.

There is outstanding care, guidance and support of pupils. Staff know pupils extremely well and treat them as individuals. Good tracking systems measure progress each term and enable teachers to identify those pupils at risk of falling behind. Very effective interventions support pupils who have moderate learning difficulties or speech and language difficulties. They are identified as needing help quickly. The effective support enables these pupils to make good progress. Marking consistently shows pupils how they can improve, and contributes well to the good academic guidance pupils receive. They know their targets in writing and mathematics. Teachers give pupils helpful verbal feedback and involve them in assessing their own learning, so that they are clear about what they need to do next. Many parents mentioned the wonderful care their children receive. One said, 'The caring atmosphere is amazing!' Another said, 'It feels like a big family.' The school is quick to respond to parental concerns, and enjoys overwhelming support from parents.

The curriculum is adapted well to the needs of pupils, and especially helps those who speak English as an additional language. Through the Comenius Project, pupils have established links with pupils in other European countries, and hosted visits. A group of pupils recently took part in a festival of music and dance in Italy, an outstanding opportunity to develop their cultural understanding. Pupils enjoy residential visits to Flatford Mill in Suffolk and to the Isle of Wight. One commented, 'We have a chance to be independent and do our own thing.' The school has recently extended its good range of clubs to include Tae Kwon Do. Visits include places of educational interest like the Museum of Domestic Architecture and Hampton Court. Visitors and workshops help pupils to learn new skills, such as circus skills and badge making. There are increasing links across subjects that help to bring them alive. For example, Year 6 pupils were challenged to plan a party and design a garden, having to draw up specifications and costings. The school is continuing to develop the curriculum's creativity across all classes.

The impact of leadership and management is good, as a result of effective systems for monitoring and leaders' clear evaluation of the school's strengths and areas to develop. Leaders are good role models and contribute effectively to the school's caring ethos. Subject leaders have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and monitor most aspects well, although they do not all have time to observe lessons. The governing body has made rapid progress under its new chair, and forged closer links with parents and staff. A curriculum conference enabled governors to meet with subject leaders to discuss progress in their areas. Governors are asking searching questions and making use of their considerable expertise to benefit the school. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and is well placed to continue to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Satisfactory teaching ensures children get off to a sound start in the Reception class. They settle quickly and cooperate together well. There are effective adult led activities, but the independent tasks sometimes lack sufficient focus on what children are to learn. Children happily participate in a range of activities, but sometimes have too much freedom to move from one to the next so that they are not developing sustained concentration. The outdoor area is covered, but is too restricted, so that the teacher has to make use of the main playground for any physical activity.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision in the Foundation Stage by focusing more on children's sustained independent learning and enlarging the outside area.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching by ensuring lessons consistently have a brisk pace and match work to the full range of pupils' abilities.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	2
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	2

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

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

26 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Theresa's RC School, London, N3 2TD

Thank you very much for making me so welcome at your school. I did enjoy meeting you. I agree that yours is a good school. Here are some of the things I particularly like about it.

- Your behaviour is excellent and you care for one another very well.
- You make good progress in your learning and achieve above average standards.
- You really enjoy school and are hardly ever away.
- The teaching is good and the lessons are interesting.
- There is plenty for you to do in the way of clubs and visits.
- The school looks after you especially well when you need help.
- The school is led well, and the staff work hard to support you.

The youngest children settle into school life happily. I think more could be expected of them when they are working away from the adults. The outside area for the Reception class is rather small, so I have suggested the school thinks about making it bigger. I have asked the teachers to make sure that they give you enough time to do your tasks in lessons, and that the work is just right for you. I know they are keen to hear your views about how well you are doing in school.

Thank you again for your help. My best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr N Butt
Lead Inspector

