

St Helen's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102771
Local Authority	Newham
Inspection number	308115
Inspection dates	9 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Mr John Earish

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	412
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr W Poulter
Headteacher	Mrs G Hicks
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2003
School address	Falcon Street London E13 8DD
Telephone number	020 7476 1785
Fax number	020 7476 7907

Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues, achievement and standards, teaching and learning, leadership and management gathering evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and documents. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with parents, children, governors and staff 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

St Helen's is much larger than most primary schools. It serves an area of Newham identified as having significant social and economic deprivation. The very large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups of which three quarters are at the early stages of learning English. A quarter of the pupils are from refugees and asylum seeker families. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very much higher than that found nationally. When children start school, their skills and abilities are very much lower than those expected of three year olds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities [LDD] is very high when compared to that found nationally. The number of pupils entering and leaving the school other than at normal times is rising. The construction of a new school building alongside the present one is about to begin.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Six years ago St Helen's was designated a failing school but it is now outstandingly effective. The inspector wanted to find out how the school has achieved this and whether there was still the capacity to continue improving.

The headteacher and senior management team have managed the period of change extremely well. Outstanding leadership at all levels has enabled the school to meet the needs of the large numbers of refugee, asylum seeker and ethnic minority families who live in the community by creating a common sense of purpose amongst all adults. Many of the children have never experienced full time education and often have emotional, behavioural and educational difficulties. Leaders at all levels have constantly adapted the outstanding curriculum to capture the children's enthusiasm for learning whatever their backgrounds. The school has achieved this by giving a high priority to inclusion, raising pupils' self-esteem and developing partnerships between the child, the school, the home, the Parish and the community. All these factors have contributed to the school's rapid improvement.

The inspector also found that rigorous monitoring; highly effective self-evaluation and actions to develop the curriculum have enabled the pupils to make significantly better progress overall than other pupils nationally. The achievement of the oldest pupils was outstanding this year. For example, nine out of ten pupils reached the expected level 4 in English and just under half attained the higher level 5. It was an even better picture in science with very nearly all of the pupils reaching level 4 and just under two thirds reaching the higher level 5. This is particularly impressive given their very low starting points in the Foundation Stage.

At the heart of this success lies the very high quality teaching and the skilful use of assessment information to set work that corresponds very well to the pupils' varying needs and abilities. High quality quality assurance procedures for monitoring teachers' performance have eradicated unsatisfactory teaching and learning. The pupils have also responded extremely well to the many opportunities they have been given to work independently and in small groups. This has resulted in pupils becoming confident and independent learners who are able to learn from their mistakes. Some of the older pupils would like to see the opportunities they have to assess for themselves, or with a buddy, how well they are doing in English and mathematics extended to all subjects. They find this really helps them build on the rapid progress they make during lessons and become self-critical about their achievements.

Pupils' personal development and their care, support and guidance are outstanding. This is because adults are highly effective at tracking and supporting pupils' personal and academic progress so they can achieve extremely well. Attendance is excellent. Pupils treat each other with great respect, behave exceptionally well and genuinely want to learn. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.

Outstanding leadership and management have established a caring environment where all pupils are equally valued and diversity is celebrated. The school has also reached out to the community and supported parents in realising the high expectations they have for their children. This extremely strong partnership contributes to the school's outstanding capacity to improve further. The governors are also making an outstanding contribution to the strategic management of the school by acting as an effective critical friend. They have worked extremely hard to secure sufficient funding for a new school building alongside the present one. Teachers and governors are already making plans to ensure that disruption to the school curriculum is kept to a minimum.

Effectiveness of the foundation stage

Grade: 1

Children in the Foundation Stage also achieve very well. They start school with skills and abilities that are very low. They make rapid progress because teaching is of high standard but few reach all of the goals set for them by the start of Year 1. The outstanding curriculum promotes children's social, personal, emotional and academic development very

well. The development of the new school building will bring the whole of the Foundation Stage together under one roof and will considerably increase the amount of space for outdoor learning. This will make the implementation of common strategies across the Key Stage much easier to manage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the opportunities for pupils to assess their own work, as they already do in English and mathematics, in order to sustain rapid progress.

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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 effectiveness in the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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 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

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

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?	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 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.

18 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Helen's RC Primary School, London, E13 8DD

Thank you for welcoming me to your school during my recent visit. Like so many other visitors, I found you polite, very well behaved and very willing to speak about your school. I believe, like you, that you go to an outstanding school. I know that you are all very excited about the construction of a new school alongside your existing building. You told me how much you are looking forward to having new classrooms and playing areas. You quite rightly recognise that this will cause some disruption but you all agree that it will be worth it in the end. The headteacher and governors are making plans to minimise the disruption to the curriculum so you can continue to enjoy your lessons without too many distractions.

I particularly liked the fact that you do so well in English, mathematics and science. You really enjoy learning and want to do well. You told me that you feel safe in the school, and that the adults like you to give your views and listen very carefully to you. The teaching in your school is excellent and it means that, together with your very positive attitudes to work, you make excellent progress particularly in reading and writing.

I have asked the school to give you more opportunities to assess your own work as you already do in English and mathematics. You told me this helps you understand what you need to do to improve your work and do even better.

I know that you will continue to work hard and I am sure that you will help your teachers to make your school even better. I hope that you have great success in the future.

Yours faithfully,

John Earish
Lead Inspector

