

St John's Walworth Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100831
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	323360
Inspection date	29 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	194
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	Father John Walker
Headteacher	Mr Keith Fox
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Larcom Street London SE17 1NQ
Telephone number	020 7703 4920
Fax number	020 7703 8880

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and particularly investigated:

- the progress children make from the start of the Reception Year to the end of Year 6
- how leaders evaluate the impact of initiatives aimed at boosting pupils' progress
- the way pupils contribute to and learn from the local and wider community.

The inspectors met with pupils, some staff and governors. Parts of lessons were observed, parents' questionnaires and a sample of pupils' work were examined and school information, including its self-evaluation, was scrutinised. 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 where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This school is a little smaller than average. Most of the pupils are Black British, largely with an African heritage. Around a quarter of the pupils are learning English as an additional language but few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties is above average. Their main learning needs are for speech and language delay and moderate learning difficulties. For pupils in Years 5 and 6, provision is extended through extra key skills lessons before and after the ordinary school day. The school provides for children in the Reception Year of their Early Years Foundation Stage.

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.

'I was very happy when my son got into this school. I prayed for it and the Lord heard me'. This moving comment from a parent sums up the views of the vast majority of parents who greatly value the education their children receive at this school. One of the key features that stands out at St John's Walworth is the way pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates every aspect of school life. Year 6 pupils, for example, start the morning by considering a 'thought for the day'. During the inspection, this was a line from Ecclesiastes: 'Cast your bread among the waters for after many days you will find it again'. Pupils reflected on this injunction and their thoughtful discussion correctly concluded that it meant that 'what goes around comes around' while also reinforcing higher-level work that the class had covered in literacy. Boys and girls from different backgrounds get on very well together. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils listen well and are eager to learn. Parents strongly recognise this and say that, 'It is a school that helps to build children's self-confidence'. Many describe the school as having transformed children's lives.

Teaching and learning are outstanding because lessons are consistently good or better. Standards are above average, which represents excellent progress in relation to pupils' below average starting points. Again, parents sum this up aptly: several comment that, 'The children are pushed to reach their full potential'. Teachers' expectations are high and they set work for pupils that challenges and extends them, although sometimes lesson introductions go over ground that is already familiar to the more able pupils. Pupils who have learning difficulties and those who need extra help with their English benefit from very well-tailored support from the many adults who help in class. This helps these pupils to make the same very good progress made by their peers. Classes are orderly and lessons proceed at a good pace, so that pupils get a lot done. Their writing, for example, has improved as a result of the opportunities they have to practise and apply their literacy skills. The excellent feedback given to pupils through teachers' marking has also helped to drive improvement as pupils know precisely what they need to focus on to improve their work. Teachers make very good use of assessment to match work to pupils' different capabilities. A notable strength of the teaching at St John's Walworth is the way teachers use questioning to push pupils to develop their thinking, for example by explaining the methods they use to solve a mental mathematics problem.

Pupils feel very safe in school because they are so very well looked after. They talk very knowledgeably about the need for regular exercise and a healthy diet, and, in the main, they practise what they preach. Pupils' enthusiasm for school is evident in their attendance, which has been consistently above average. They enjoy school so much because the curriculum is made exciting, relevant and fun. Pupils feel that they have a real say not just in the school, through the school council and their other responsibilities, but also in the wider community through their active involvement in local environmental and regeneration schemes that are revitalising the Elephant and Castle and the surrounding area. Partnerships with local businesses give pupils experiences that go beyond those they might routinely have in other schools, such as the annual trip for Year 6 pupils to see how The Guardian is produced. Pupils' involvement in local history work commemorating Charlie Chaplin has also helped to broaden their horizons, alongside work on history celebrating the different cultural heritages represented in the school. Visits, including to Christian, Jewish and Muslim places of worship, help to bring pupils' learning to life. The excellent curriculum is further enhanced through the many clubs on offer to the

pupils, and the early morning booster classes held for pupils in Years 5 and 6. These are much appreciated by parents. As one wrote, 'The booster class before school every morning prepares the children well for secondary school'. The excellent progress pupils make in their key skills prepares them exceptionally well for their move to secondary school and their future working lives.

St John's Walworth is successful in providing an excellent education for its pupils because it is exceedingly well run. The headteacher, leadership team and governors keep their fingers on the pulse by checking carefully all aspects of provision. Their very clear and accurate picture of how well the school is doing has helped them to make changes to raise the quality of provision and it demonstrates the school's excellent capacity for continued improvement. Leaders' monitoring of lessons is thorough and is linked to their overview of the progress each pupil is making. This means that teachers are routinely quizzed on how they are moving forward the learning of any pupil who falls behind. Individual children's profiles keep a track of children's progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage, but this does not give as sharp a picture as it could because it is built up from relatively lengthy but infrequent observations.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding. The last inspection described St John's Walworth as being 'at the vibrant heart of the community'. That is just as much the case now, both through the Church, the regeneration project and the school's musical links. School leaders and staff work in close partnership with parents and keep them very well informed about how their children are doing. As a parent put it, 'The staff are very understanding and caring people. The school makes the children and parents feel as though they belong to a very large family'.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the Reception Year from as many as 18 different pre-school settings and with a very wide spread of abilities. Several of the children are very able but attainment on entry to the school is generally below that expected for children's ages. There are good arrangements for helping children settle into school through liaison both with home and the many pre-schools, and parents are very happy with the way their children are looked after. Space is very much at a premium in the classroom and its small covered outdoor area. This limits opportunities for children to use large ride-on toys as these can only be used when the class has timetabled use of the playground. Nevertheless, the classroom and its outdoor area are well-equipped and provide a stimulating learning environment. The provision for Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Shortcomings in provision in the recent past were identified by school leaders and quickly tackled. As a result, progress has been greatly accelerated and standards this year are above average and notably higher than previous years. Social development is especially strong, and the children's writing is remarkably well advanced. What is really moving the children's progress along is the way staff guide them to use and apply their developing skills in their play activities. During the inspection, many of the children were using their numeracy skills considering prices and then writing out shopping lists to take to the shop in the role play area. They showed remarkable patience as they queued while the child who had taken on the role of the shopkeeper steadfastly refused to open up for business until the stipulated time. Staff keep a track of each child's progress in a folder that covers each of the Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning. Their observations, often coupled with photographs showing the child's activities, are detailed but often several weeks apart. School

leaders acknowledge that staff would have a clearer picture that would help them plan still better for the children if their notes were shorter and more frequent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make more effective use of assessment and tracking information in the Reception Year by keeping shorter, more frequent records of children's day-to-day achievements.

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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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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	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 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?	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**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

10 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Walworth Church of England Primary School, London, SE17 1NQ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Many of you and many of your parents told us that you thought St John's Walworth is a super school. You are right. Yours is an outstanding school. You are making excellent progress in your learning. In part that is because the school is exceedingly well run and the teachers expect a lot of you. But you must take much credit too because you listen and behave so very well and you rise to the challenges that the teachers set for you. One of the things that really stands out about your school is your thoughtfulness, both in your work and in the way you get on with each other and take an interest in the local area and wider world.

Staff take excellent care of you, and the exciting things you get to do at school and on the many visits help to make learning fun. The children in the Reception class also greatly enjoy the fun things they get to do at school and these are really moving their learning on. The staff in their class make detailed notes on how well the children are doing and use these to make sure the children's needs are fully met. We think it would help them to do this even better if they made shorter more frequent notes. For those of you in the older classes, your targets and your teachers' marking are giving you very clear guidance on how to improve your work. You can help to do even better by making sure that you always read the teachers' comments and do your very best to follow their advice.

Thank you again for making our day with you so enjoyable, and our very best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Selwyn Ward

Lead Inspector