

# Westminster Cathedral RC Primary School

Bessborough Place, London, SW1V 3SE

**Inspection dates** 6–7 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils attain standards in English and mathematics that are higher than many other schools in the country. They make good progress over time, especially in reading, which is stronger than writing.
- There are no significant gaps in the achievement of different groups of pupils. All groups of pupils do well.
- Much of the teaching is good and some, though not enough, is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will work hard, and they do.
- A warm welcome awaits visitors to 'WCPS'. Pupils are charming, polite and well mannered. Their behaviour is exemplary, and they are a credit to the school and to their families.
- The headteacher's high expectations and ambition for all to do well are met with a strong sense of teamwork and commitment from staff.
- Members of the governing body are regular visitors who know the school very well. They have high ambitions for the school and challenge the school's leaders to ensure that pupils achieve their best.
- Pastoral care for pupils is strong. They feel safe and secure, knowing that they are 'valued for who you are'.
- Music makes a strong contribution to the life of the school and to opportunities for pupils to take part in performances.
- A wide range of clubs and special events add richness to pupils' experience of school and make learning memorable.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is of a consistently high quality.
- There is more to do to improve the quality of pupils' writing in subjects other than English.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made 16 observations of varying length of the quality of teaching in lessons. The large majority of observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher or other senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books. They listened to some pupils read and watched a whole-school assembly.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from Years 3 to 6 and talked to pupils during lessons, in the playground and as they moved around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, subject leaders, the whole governing body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors spoke informally with other members of staff.
- Inspectors took account of the 24 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke informally with parents and carers at the start of the school day. The questionnaires completed by 15 members of staff were considered.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation which included: the school's view of how well it is doing and plans for improvement; evidence about how teachers are set targets to improve pupils' progress and records of observations of the quality of teaching; the governing body's and its committees' minutes; the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress over time; and records relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Jane Wotherspoon, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Wendy Forbes

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is about average in size, with more boys than girls, significantly so in some classes. Almost all pupils are Catholic.
- Over three quarters of pupils come from minority ethnic groups, with the largest group from Any Other White background.
- Well over half the pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is low.
- The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is almost twice the national average. In the main, these needs relate to pupils' speech, language and communication skills.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There have been a number of staff changes this year, with four teachers new to the school from September 2012 and the absence of the deputy headteacher covered by short-term contracts.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency in the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding by:
  - increasing the pace, challenge and depth of learning, and making sure all pupils have activities at the right level, especially the more able
  - improving the balance in the Reception class between learning led by an adult and opportunities for children to choose activities and explore things for themselves while ensuring that adults are on hand to pose the right questions at the right time to extend children's learning.
- Strengthen pupils' writing skills by planning and providing further opportunities for pupils to practise writing in a range of subjects when reviewing and redeveloping the curriculum.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' attainment is above average. Results in tests in Year 6 and assessments in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 have risen in the last two years and were higher than other schools in England in 2012. The proportion reaching expectations for their age is high, with an increasing proportion exceeding expectations. Predictions for the current year suggest standards are likely to be similar this year.
- Children make a positive start to school life and leave the Reception Year ready for school. More pupils in Year 1 reached the required standard in the phonic screening check (how well pupils know the sounds that letters represent) in 2012 than did so nationally. Those pupils who did not reach the standard have been supported effectively during Year 2 and are now well launched into reading.
- All groups of pupils attained better than their counterparts nationally in 2012. The performance of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium was strong; they were almost a year ahead of the same group nationally in English and mathematics as well as slightly ahead of their peers in school.
- Learning English as an additional language is not a barrier to pupils' good progress at WCPS. These pupils do as well as others in the school and reach levels of attainment that are about a year above non-English speakers in the rest of the country. Pupils who have special educational needs, including those with speech and language difficulties, have additional targeted support that helps them to achieve well.
- During the current year, pupils' progress has been a little more variable where there have been staffing changes or weaker teaching. Pupils' progress in Years 1 and 5 is not as strong, and the fastest progress is in Years 2 and 6, where teaching is strongest. However, differences in rates of progress are small and pupils catch up quickly because of carefully planned support.
- Reading is promoted strongly and pupils make exceptional progress over time. Writing is relatively weaker than reading, although the school's focus on writing, particularly boys' writing, is bringing about improvement both in the quality and quantity of pupils' written work. Nonetheless, too much use of worksheets in some subjects limits pupils' opportunities to use the skills developed in English lessons, where the quality of the work they do is better.
- Music is a strength. The class teaching and wide range of opportunities to sing, to learn to play an instrument and to take part in performances contribute much to pupils' confidence and cultural development. Art is also strong; pupils' high-quality work on display shows a wide range of skills developed in a systematic way. Pupils' skills in using computers are also well developed to contribute much to learning in other subjects.
- In lessons, pupils work hard. They are keen to please their teacher, take pride in their work and, among older pupils, the quality of presentation is high.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Taken over time, teaching is good and has a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement. What is required for teaching to become outstanding is a better level of consistency - day in, day out and from year to year.
- Teachers set high expectations for pupils' behaviour in class and create a calm working environment that encourages a strong work ethic from pupils. They often plan activities that give pupils the chance to work together in pairs and groups. Pupils rise to the challenge to work with determination, effort and perseverance.
- Generally, teachers are effective at checking that pupils understand what they are learning so that they can adapt tasks where necessary or offer further encouragement to pupils. Pupils' work is marked regularly and consistently using WWW (what went well) and EBI (even better if), which pupils say helps them to know what to do better next time.

- Occasionally, teachers spend too long introducing the tasks and this detracts from the time that pupils have to practise their skills. Here, the pitch of the challenge is not always high enough, especially for the more-able pupils.
- In the Reception class, the activities that children choose for themselves promote curiosity but are not always focused enough on the skills that children are expected to learn. At other times, during teacher-led activities, the teacher constrains opportunities for children to explore things for themselves. What is effective, though, is the way the teacher gives the children thinking time before they answer questions to explain what they have learnt from an activity.
- The outstanding teaching observed was characterised by a careful step-by-step approach that balanced the teaching input with the time for pupils to practise the skill. An example, in Year 2, ensured that pupils developed the structure of writing, including correct punctuation, alongside an opportunity to experiment with words and use increasingly sophisticated vocabulary for their age. Similes such as 'eyes as black as storm clouds' to describe the shark resulted from this input and one girl created a series of words to describe the shark's negative features by putting the prefix 'un' before the words that she had used to describe the positive features. What was important here was that the teacher kept a balance between the *pace* of learning and *depth* of learning. She gave pupils the time to really consolidate their learning and get the most from the writing opportunities with thinking time and time to rehearse their ideas before putting them into a structured piece of work.
- A wide range of specialist teaching makes a strong contribution to pupils' achievement. Teaching for small groups, both in and out of the class, as well as specialist teaching in music, and information and communication technology, are all successful strategies used by the school.
- The support of teaching assistants is directed carefully and staff are well briefed so that they know exactly what the pupils they are helping are expected to learn. They are skilful at asking the right question at the right time to make sure pupils have understood what they are learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- There is a welcoming atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils' huge pride in their school is reflected in their exemplary conduct and good manners. Breaktime is a thoroughly social occasion where older pupils look after younger ones with an exceptional level of care and vigilance.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well. They create a positive atmosphere for learning in class and promote pupils' personal development, with many opportunities to work in pairs and groups. Relationships are strong as a result. Pupils say lessons are hardly ever disrupted.
- Pupils enjoy school. They work well together, listen to each other and contribute to lessons with thoughtful questions as well as answers. The oldest talk enthusiastically about all the things they enjoy doing most and the many memorable experiences they have had.
- Pupils say they feel safe here and that 'People treat you fairly here'. They show courtesy and respect for each other. They develop social skills and gain positive insights into how people can get along together in harmony and cooperation regardless of their ethnic and social differences.
- Pupils are well versed in what constitutes bullying, including racist name-calling, and are sure that these are exceedingly rare occurrences. Any 'falling out' is quickly resolved with the help of an adult where necessary or support from the many 'friends you can trust'. They are very well aware of the potential dangers of using the internet and social media sites.
- Pupils have a strong moral code. The whole-school assembly led by Year 4 provided high-quality examples of the work they have done in class while encouraging all pupils to reflect on and celebrate the mission of the church in school, in the community and in the wider world. It prompted all assembled to remember their duty to support others through giving what they can.
- Pupils take seriously their roles and responsibilities as school council members, house captains, head boy/girl, prefects and members of the Eco Club, who regularly check each room in the school to ensure energy is not being wasted.
- Above average attendance rates reflect pupils' desire to be in school. Systems to track pupils'

attendance, to analyse the attendance of different groups and individuals, and to follow up on absence are meticulous.

## **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher sets the tone for the calm, professional approach that runs throughout the school's work. Other leaders play their part in planning and leading developments in their subjects and in checking that pupils make good progress.
- Well-established and thorough systems to check the quality of teaching mean that teachers get regular feedback on what works well and what they could do better to help pupils achieve even more. Teachers' targets are set to reflect the progress their pupils make and teachers are paid in line with their performance. Improvements in teaching quality are supported through training but the headteacher is not afraid to make tough decisions when teaching does not improve enough to meet her high expectations.
- The comprehensive system for checking pupils' progress in each class, by year group and by different groups, makes sure that no-one slips through the net. The information is used exceptionally well to identify precisely which individuals are, or are not, making good enough progress. Termly meetings with staff to discuss individuals and devise strategies for supporting their progress help pupils to catch up if they fall behind.
- The very detailed improvement plan incorporates a thorough action plan for each class. Actions stem from precise analysis of the relative attainment and progress over time of different groups of pupils. Termly reviews check that pupils are on track to reach their challenging targets.
- The school has many ways of keeping in touch with parents and carers to communicate expectations and celebrate achievements. For example, in the Reception Year, parents and carers contribute to their children's records of learning.
- The effective curriculum helps to secure pupils' good achievement. Its strength is the rich range of opportunities that promote pupils' personal development and understanding of the wider world. Clubs, special events such as themed days and visits like that to Downing Street to meet the Prime Minister during the 2012 Olympics add much to pupils' enjoyment of school. Staff are currently reviewing the curriculum to make stronger links between subjects, with a range of planned topics to be launched in September 2013.
- The school is categorised as 'light touch' by the local authority. The headteacher seeks support for specific aspects of the school's development as needed.

### ■ **The governance of the school:**

- – Governors know the school very well. They are experienced, knowledgeable about their role and active in the community. Regular visits to the school to meet staff, to seek clarification about subject developments and to ask searching questions give governors valuable insight into the school's work. Governors are highly ambitious for the school and want the best for all pupils. Hence, they have made well-founded and successful spending decisions including to employ a number of staff to provide specific support for pupils who might be vulnerable to underachieving and subject specialists to teach music, and information and communication technology. They measure the impact of such decisions through the wide range of information, including analysis of the attainment and progress of groups and individual pupils, provided by the headteacher. Governors have a strong role in checking that the school's actions to improve teaching and raise standards are having the intended impact. They ensure that all statutory policies are in place including secure procedures to keep pupils safe.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101146
<b>Local authority</b>	Westminster
<b>Inspection number</b>	402845

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	207
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mary-Therese Fardon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Linda Vassallo
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 Jul 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7641 5915
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