

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101048
Local Authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	354935
Inspection dates	6–7 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Brian Oppenheim

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 of pupils on the school roll	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Christopher
Headteacher	Linda Kiernan
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 18 lessons, visited all teachers and had meetings with senior leaders, teaching staff, pupils and members of the governing body. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including the school's self-evaluation, assessment and tracking information, development planning and pupils' work. They also examined the school's arrangements for safeguarding. Staff and pupils' questionnaires were analysed, along with 29 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- Whether there is evidence of good achievement in Key Stage 2.
- Whether the school has improved attendance and what impact this has had on achievement.
- The impact of leadership on the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The impact of staffing and leadership changes on pupils' progress and achievement.

Information about the school

St Mary's is smaller than the average primary school. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds and 11 nationalities are represented. Pupils from Black African backgrounds represent the largest ethnic group and there are many from European countries. The majority speak English as an additional language. Many pupils start at the school midway through the year, the majority of whom do not speak English. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above that of most schools. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these pupils have speech, language and communication needs or moderate learning, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Over the last year, many teachers have either joined or left the school. The school has an interim headteacher, who works three and a half days a week. The deputy headteacher is acting headteacher for the remaining one and a half days. The school works closely with the Archdiocese of Southwark and has links with Wandsworth 'School Sports' Partnership and was London Citizens Primary School of the Year in 2008.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. It is rapidly improving. After a period of instability, the interim headteacher and deputy headteacher are making a positive difference. They provide clear direction and a good focus on raising standards and improving teaching and learning. They evaluate performance rigorously and know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Effective action is taken to address weaknesses, and staff morale is high. Low attainment in English and mathematics in 2008 has been raised successfully over the past two years by improving teaching and by extending the curriculum, although standards are still not high enough. Pupils' achievement in all subjects is satisfactory and standards are rising.

The school understands the needs of its pupils, families and the community it serves and uses this to support them well. The relatively high levels of pupil mobility and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language provide a challenge for the school. However, staff work successfully to ensure these pupils settle in quickly and begin learning. As a result, they make satisfactory progress from their starting points overall, attaining similar levels to those of other pupils.

Teaching is satisfactory. There is some that is good but there is still too much that is no more than satisfactory. Pupils enjoy lessons. ♦ This is borne out by the way they participate actively and their excitement when they learn something new. ♦ Lessons are planned well because teachers work together and get good support from the deputy headteacher. Teachers are usually clear what they want pupils to achieve and many use the interactive whiteboards to explain new ideas. Assessment information is used increasingly to ensure that all pupils are making progress, although it is not used routinely to set them individual targets. Additional support from teaching assistants ensures that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are catered for successfully. However, more-able pupils sometimes find the work too easy and are not stretched enough. This is supported by the results of national tests and assessments in Year 6 in which few pupils reach the higher than expected levels of attainment in English and mathematics.

Pupils' behaviour is good and they show care and respect for one another's feelings, backgrounds and beliefs. They play together very well in the playground and readily share ideas, opinions and equipment in lessons. Previously, attendance was below average but has improved in the last two terms because of the school's thorough approach to monitoring and following up absence. Establishing a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the school has helped to raise attendance, which is having a positive impact on achievement.

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Good partnerships with community groups add much to pupils' experience of school. The link with the local independent school, for example, has supported pupils' reading skills, and involvement with a school sports partnership provides specialist teaching. The partnership with the local authority has been particularly successful and has a strong impact on driving improvements. Pupils benefit greatly from an outstanding range of visits to museums and local places of interest that extend their experience of the wider community very successfully.

The opportunity for senior leaders to restructure the school's staffing has been used well to raise the quality of teaching. Effective management structures are now having a good impact on developing consistency in the way teachers manage behaviour and reinforce the school's values. However, the impact on teaching and learning is less evident and there remain inconsistencies. Middle leaders are very supportive of the school's direction and are developing their monitoring roles. The governing body is supportive of the school and has been very involved during the period of instability. Improving standards, attendance and teaching, together with the vision and energy of senior leaders, mean that the school's capacity to improve is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that at least 80% is good or better by the end of the summer term 2011 by:
 - setting more demanding work for the more able so that they make the best possible progress
 - using assessment information to set individual targets for pupils
 - the better use of questioning to check progress, probe understanding and extend learning
 - using marking to provide pupils with feedback about how to improve their work.
- Raise standards in English and mathematics across the school, but especially in Key Stage 2, by building on the work to develop the curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children start the school with skills and abilities that are well below those levels expected for their age, particularly in their language, communication and social skills. As a result of good provision, the children make good progress and do well in developing their language skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In Key Stage 1, pupils also make good progress in lessons regardless of their background or ability. However, between Year 3 and Year 5, the rate of progress drops so that it is broadly satisfactory. This is confirmed by lessons in Key Stage 2, where pupils were usually seen to be making satisfactory progress. Their progress was better in classes where the quality of teaching was consistently good. Where teaching was satisfactory, more-able pupils were not given demanding enough work and this limited the pace of their learning.

In a Year 2 class, pupils learned very effectively how to round up numbers to the nearest 10. They were very engaged and motivated because of the excellent relationships with the teacher and praise they received. The work was suitably demanding and the support given by the teaching assistant made sure all pupils were enabled to learn. All pupils, including

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girls and boys, those from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve as well as expected. This is because of the good emphasis on developing children's English language capability in the Nursery and Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2, and the resulting good progress in their communication skills.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with emotional or behavioural difficulties, make satisfactory progress. The small intervention groups, organised to help them catch up with their writing and speaking skills, for example, are generally effective. Pupils enjoy working with the teaching assistants and make sufficient progress to help them benefit in other lessons.

Pupils enjoy school. They are attentive in lessons and keen to do their best. Behaviour is good in lessons, around the school and in the playground. All pupils are valued and it is common for them to be applauded when they answer a question well or share their work with others. Pupils know the importance of healthy lifestyles and most adopt them. This is helped by the school's work towards gaining the National Healthy School award. After-school sports activities are well attended. Pupils feel safe in school and are clear about what to do if bullying occurs. They say this can happen occasionally but teachers deal with it quickly. Pupils develop a good understanding of how they can serve the community. They enjoy responsibilities such as being head boy and girl, playground buddies and school councillors. Pupils have been involved in local community projects and regularly raise funds for charities.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall. A few lessons are outstanding. Relationships between staff and pupils are consistently good. This is why pupils are keen to learn and are enthusiastic about their work. Teachers manage lessons well and there is seldom any disruption. Teachers know pupils well but the more able are not always given challenging enough work. Learning outcomes are explained carefully so that pupils have a good understanding of what they are going to do. Teaching assistants support pupils effectively and this enables learners to take a full part in lessons. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but do not always provide sufficient information on how or what to improve. Praise is used well to give oral feedback. The use of questioning to check progress, and probe and extend pupils' learning, is inconsistent across the school.

The curriculum is good. It engages pupils effectively and is matched well to their needs, interests and aspirations. The range of enrichment activities is outstanding. All classes go out of school on a visit each half term and these are very effective in broadening their understanding of the wider community and supporting their work in lessons. During the inspection, for example, the Year 4/5 class visited the Victoria and Albert Museum as part of their work on the Victorians. Pupils said that the visits were one of the best things about school. These curriculum developments have made a good impact so far, but senior leaders are aware that these are not consolidated well enough in Key Stage 2. An

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extensive range of after-school activities, including football, gardening, board games and sewing, is well attended.

All pupils are looked after and cared for well. They are confident that there is someone they can speak to if they have a problem. For example, pupils state that bullying is dealt with effectively when it occurs. Procedures to support those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are effective in identifying and supporting these pupils. The safety of pupils is given a high priority. Good links with outside agencies, such as the education welfare service, have helped the school improve attendance successfully.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders are clear about the direction for the school, share this effectively with staff and are highly focused on improving the outcomes for pupils. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have taken difficult but decisive actions to drive improvement. There is now consistency in the way teachers manage behaviour, some teaching is good or outstanding and, consequently, standards have risen over the past two years. However, staff changes and the legacy of underachievement mean that there are significant barriers to overcome. Middle leaders are committed to improvement and have begun to make an impact on pupils' achievement.

Procedures for safeguarding are secure and ensure that pupils are safe in school. Safeguarding policies are appropriate, staff are properly trained and new staff are checked to ensure their suitability. The school promotes equality of opportunity appropriately through its improved analysis of pupils' progress. The school has established a strong sense of community and respects the range of backgrounds and cultures represented by pupils. Consequently, pupils are able to make a positive contribution, particularly to the school community itself. There are plans to develop community cohesion further and to develop links with a school in Brazil. Relationships with parents and carers are good.

The governing body has given considerable support over the past few years and a number of members are very involved in the school's work. Members have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and monitor the finances carefully. As the governing body recognises, however, it does not yet have a strong enough strategic role.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

A range of good stimulating activities both indoors and outside harnesses children's natural curiosity and gets them off to a good start. The ability and range of skills when children join the Nursery and Reception class are well below those typical for their age. All children are learning English as an additional language. There is a good emphasis on developing children's language, and personal and social skills and, as a result, they make good progress in all six areas of learning. When they join Year 1, their attainment has improved, although it is still below average.

Resources are good. Both the indoor and outdoor areas are used well, as are the teaching assistants, who support children's learning effectively. There is a good balance of adult-led activities and those children choose themselves. As a result, children have good independent learning skills and positive attitudes. Teaching is good and children get many opportunities to develop their phonic skills, which the more able use to write, for example, letters to Santa. Computers are used well to develop children's mathematical skills when they match the number of decorations on the Christmas tree. The many opportunities for role play, such as in the post office, where children write and post letters and buy stamps, promote their learning well. Children's welfare is given a high priority and, as a result, they feel secure, are confident learners and enjoy their first experience of school.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well. Teaching is monitored regularly. Effective support for teachers ensures that children receive good teaching and make good progress.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who returned questionnaires was relatively small. Those who did were mainly positively about the school. A small minority expressed concerns about the school meeting their child's needs. Inspectors found that the school caters well for most pupils but that the more able were not always challenged enough in lessons. A few parents and carers commented less positively about pupils' behaviour and how the school deals with it, whether the school was keeping their children safe or helping them to keep healthy. Inspectors found that pupils' behaviour was good and judged that the school keeps them safe and secure. The school is working to achieve the National Healthy School award. Inspectors were unable to substantiate the views of the few parents and carers who felt the school did not take account of their suggestions.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 29 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 188 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	62	10	34	0	0	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	11	38	15	52	2	4	1	3
My school informs me about my child's progress	15	52	13	45	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	45	14	48	1	3	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	12	41	15	52	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	41	16	55	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	38	14	48	3	10	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	11	38	14	48	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	38	12	41	3	10	2	7
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	38	14	48	3	10	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	34	15	52	2	7	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	12	41	14	48	2	7	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	45	12	45	1	3	2	7

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



9 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, London, SW8 4BE

Thank you for your help and friendly welcome when we visited your school. Thanks also to those who completed questionnaires about their views of your school.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. You reach average standards by the time you leave at the end of Year 6, and you make satisfactory progress during your time in school. You have a good understanding of how to stay safe and know how to keep healthy. You are well behaved in school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are provided with a good start to school. The school provides an outstanding range of extra activities, particularly visits to museums and other places of interest. Teaching is satisfactory and all of the staff look after you well.

In order to improve the school, we have asked the headteacher, staff and governing body to make more of the teaching good, provide some of you with more challenging work, and give you better feedback about how well you are doing and how you can improve your work. We also want you to be able to improve your work in English and mathematics.

Staff are determined that the school should improve. You can help your school to become better by continuing to work hard, coming to school every day and behaving well.

Yours sincerely

Brian Oppenheim

Lead inspector

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