

# St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124780
<b>Local Authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	380982
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 September 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Roderick Passant

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	199
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rob Wright
<b>Headteacher</b>	Veronica Short
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 February 2009
<b>School address</b>	Kirkley Cliff Road Lowestoft NR33 0DG
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They saw nine teachers teaching twelve lessons and carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work. In addition, they met with members of the school's senior leadership team, members of the school council, a group of Year 6 pupils and the Chair and other members of the Governing Body. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including policies associated with the safeguarding of pupils and the school improvement plan. They scrutinised the questionnaire responses of 106 pupils in Key Stage 2, 23 staff and 83 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effective is the school in narrowing the gap between the attainment of various groups of pupils and the national average by ensuring planned work matches their needs?
- The consistency of pupils' progress across the school.
- The accuracy of the school's self-evaluation and its effectiveness in bringing about improvement.

## Information about the school

The size of the school is broadly average: it draws its pupils from a wide area. The school accepts pupils with a range of faiths. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not or is believed not to be English, mainly Tagalog and Russian, is above average, and a few of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. An average number of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is high.

The school has gained an award for its work in economic sustainability and was awarded Healthy Schools status in March 2011. The current headteacher was appointed in April 2009 just after the previous inspection.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

There has been recent and ongoing improvement so that the school now provides a good education for its pupils. Pupils enjoy school and achieve well. Early gains in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 are now being built on year-on-year in Years 3 and 4; this was an issue in the previous report and in recent years. As a result, pupils are making good progress over their time in school from their starting points. Attainment is broadly average. Current Year 6 pupils have made good progress from their below average Year 2 results and are well placed to improve further. Because of 'Big Writing' work, attainment in writing is above average across the school. The school is now focusing on improving standards in mathematics. It has introduced a new scheme and made changes to give more time to consolidate prior learning. However, opportunities are missed in mathematics to exploit cross-curricular links by using real-life problems for pupils to apply their knowledge and understanding, particularly to challenge higher-attaining pupils.

The school is a cohesive and inclusive community. It is very confident in its faith provision and pupils of all faiths are absorbed very well into the school community. Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds get on well with each other. Behaviour is good: it has improved because the revised behaviour policy is understood by pupils and used consistently by staff. The school fosters pupils' self-esteem and confidence well because of the good levels of care, guidance and support pupils receive. They are therefore confident in the adults and feel safe. Developing respect for others is a core school value. Pupils develop a good understanding of right and wrong. Cultural development is enhanced by work in French and the pen-pal and video links fostered with a school in France, as well as other work within the curriculum. There are good opportunities for pupils to work and play together and develop their social skills.

Teaching is good and, on occasions, outstanding. In the excellent lessons, the level of challenge is particularly high because staff plan opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their initiative in open-ended tasks. While not consistent, some teachers are particularly effective in cementing the learning partnership by developing pupils' understanding and ownership of the success criteria presented at the start of the lesson. For example, teachers help pupils to devise their own success criteria to judge their learning and how to improve.

The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. She has sensitively and effectively stitched together staff into a cohesive team which is mutually supportive, and established an effective senior leadership team whose members share her

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commitment to the school's improvement. Target setting is challenging; self-evaluation is accurate and uses a wide range of sources. There is careful monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress and subsequent clarity and effectiveness of initiatives to support individual pupils or to identify, and then tackle, identified weaknesses in a prioritised approach. There is good capacity for ongoing and sustained improvement.

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

- Extend the range of learning opportunities in mathematics to include real-life problems to provide additional challenge for all pupils and particularly those capable of higher attainment.
- Develop the quality of teaching further by promoting and sharing the existing good practice in the school to:
  - develop the confidence of all staff in planning open-ended tasks which provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and show their initiative
  - enable all pupils to understand what good learning looks like in lessons so that they are better able to judge the effectiveness of their own learning and how to improve further.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils settle to work quickly and display interest and enthusiasm. They develop their speaking and listening skills because there are good opportunities in lessons to share and rehearse ideas. Pupils' progress in reading is good, helped by the whole-class texts that they read together. Pupils develop a good vocabulary because this is given consistent emphasis in lessons. Pupils are proud of their work, with older pupils taking care with their presentation in mathematics, for example. Music and French are particular strengths within the school.

Pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress because classrooms provide a rich language environment with good opportunities for pupils to practise their speaking and listening skills. A bilingual teacher provides particularly good support to Russian speakers. Because of their work in French, pupils value languages. Pupils are friendly and welcoming, and they provide good informal language support to these pupils as they work and play together. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because adults are skilled at breaking tasks down into small steps, and in using items and practical resources to teach basic concepts and reinforce their skills. Pupils' progress is enhanced by a range of effective intervention strategies, including one-to-one and working in small groups, specifically to support them in developing confidence.

Unvalidated data indicates that in the 2011 tests, pupils at the end of Year 6 did well

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and made good progress from their broadly average starting points at the end of Year 2. In English, in particular, pupils capable of higher attainment are now challenged effectively. In 2011, just under a half of the Year 6 pupils gained a higher level for their age in their reading and writing tests. In mathematics, the proportion was not as high but is improving over time. In class, there is little difference in the performance of boys and girls. The focus on writing has developed boys' English skills which, until relatively recently, were below average.

Pupils have a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle and how to keep themselves safe through the work in the curriculum, as well as the emphasis on sport. Pupils take pride in their school and assume a range of responsibilities, such as play and singing leaders and house captains. The school council is active and contributes to discussions about aspects of school life. There is a suggestion box for pupils in each classroom. The large majority of pupils feel the school listens to their views. Pupils participate in a range of community outreach events, particularly those related to their work in music. They demonstrate their compassion through fundraising events for local and global charities, support a child in Zambia to attend school, and play a full part in the church community. Pupils' academic skills and personal qualities ensure that they are prepared well for the next steps in their education. Attendance is average. The number of persistent absentees is small. Overall attendance rates are a little depressed because of a few pupils making extended visits to homeland countries.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

**How effective is the provision?**

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

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Teachers’ planning is detailed and work is matched well to the needs of pupils so that they progress well. Adults provide effective and skilled support in classrooms. Learning is underpinned by the good relationships that exist between teachers and pupils. Lessons are presented in a lively manner, proceed at a good pace and teachers manage the classrooms well. Teachers share the learning objectives linked to success criteria with pupils. On occasion, these are not always presented in language that is easily understood by the pupils and some staff are better than others at helping pupils use the success criteria to evaluate their learning. Staff are confident in their subject knowledge and make good use of the interactive whiteboards to catch pupils’ interest. They make good use of questions to check on pupils’ learning. In outstanding lessons, pupils responded to the challenge of the more open-ended nature of the task, which gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their initiative. Marking is encouraging, supportive and helpful in pointing out improvements.

Intensive work has been carried out over the past two years to develop a curriculum based on pupils’ interests, and ensure a rich range of experiences and progression in skills. It caters for the needs of all pupils through carefully targeted formal and informal provision. It ensures pupils’ good personal development and progress. Staff are developing links between subjects to provide a variety of contexts to develop pupils’ skills. Currently, opportunities are missed to extend learning in mathematics through real-life problems. Older pupils talked with enthusiasm about the interesting things they do and the curriculum plays a significant part in pupils’ enjoyment of school. There are good enrichment opportunities through trips and visitors and the well-supported clubs open to pupils.

The number of pupils in any particular year group with ethnic backgrounds other than White British is often small but their progress is monitored closely. Support for individual pupils is particularly effective and there are good examples where the school has made a significant difference to their behaviour and attitudes through good quality pastoral care. There are good links with specialist agencies to support pupils and meet their needs, including specialist support, access to a counsellor and family support worker. There is a good programme of induction to the main feeder secondary school and close liaison to ensure pupils’ needs continue to be met. The school has close links with the education welfare officer and is vigilant in following up concerns regarding absence. The school is currently reviewing its procedures to enhance attendance and positively promotes good attendance through awarding a good attendance rosette to class winners in the merit assembly.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>

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**The effectiveness of care, guidance and support**

**2**

### **How effective are leadership and management?**

There is strong teamwork and a professional, reflective ethos amongst staff. The school's leadership at all levels has brought about rapid improvements. Teaching has improved. The school improvement plan has identified accurately key areas of further improvement.

The governing body provides good strategic leadership. It ensures that the school meets its statutory requirements and places a high priority on ensuring staff and pupils are safe. Safeguarding is good because there are good links with key agencies, well-developed risk assessments and clear policies and logs in place. The governing body monitors the work of the school and pupils' attainment and progress effectively and, through reported classroom visits, provides good support and appropriate, informed challenge to the school. It has consulted parents and carers and, for example, revised the number of trips in the light of parental comments.

The school has a clear commitment to promoting equal opportunities and closing the attainment gap of potentially vulnerable groups, and is tackling this through close monitoring and tailoring of its provision. The focus on writing has ensured that boys' attainment in English has improved significantly. The school roll is enhanced by pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and beliefs. Pupils get on well with each other because they develop respect for others' beliefs and backgrounds and as a result, the school is a very cohesive community. The school has also made links with others abroad through its work in French and the Church. Pupils' good cultural awareness is further developed through work in the curriculum. There is good outreach work within the local community and developing links within it. Various initiatives have been consciously developed but are at an early stage of being formally drawn together into a specific plan. There are good links established with parents and carers, supported through a wide range of communication, including the homework diaries. Almost all parents and carers judge the school keeps them well informed about their children's progress and that the school helps them support their children's learning. The 'Share' events between the school and parents and carers, such as the ones held on cultural diversity and mathematics, have been particularly well received.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>

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<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

While there is year-on-year variation, children start the Reception class at a stage of development broadly typical for their age. They make good progress. For the past two years, attainment by the end of Reception has been above average. Careful induction, visits to the children in their nursery settings and a close working relationship with parents and carers ensures that children settle quickly: children are confident and happy and work and play together well. Ongoing assessment is used particularly well to track their progress and to adjust the curriculum to challenge them in the 'next steps' in their learning, building on their interests and fostering their individuality. Planning is detailed. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of young children and they are adept at extending their language and number skills within the learning opportunities that they provide. There is a good balance of adult-led activities and activities that children chose for themselves. The outdoor area is stimulating. Indoors is also bright and colourful but some resources are tired and require additional enhancement, particularly, for example, the range of large books.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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 response rate from parents and carers was above average, as was the positive response to individual questions. In the main, parents and carers were very positive about the school, stressing the care the school provides and its approachability. A few parents and carers expressed some concerns about the school's management of behaviour. The inspection found that the new behaviour policy is clearly structured, used consistently, understood by children and has brought about improvement to behaviour, which is now good.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's Roman Catholic 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 83 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 199 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	75	20	24	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	64	77	19	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	50	60	32	39	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	54	36	43	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	52	63	31	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	48	58	32	39	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	51	61	31	37	0	0	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)	53	64	26	31	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	50	60	29	35	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	47	35	42	6	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	48	38	46	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	52	63	29	35	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	58	70	25	30	0	0	0	0

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



26 September 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Lowestoft, NR33 ODG**

Thank you for making us so welcome in your school. Our particular thanks go to those pupils who gave up part of their lunchtime to talk to us. What you had to say was helpful in helping us gain a view of your school.

St Mary's is a good school. You are all making good progress and achieve well in your work and in the way the school is helping you to grow up. You are making particularly good progress in your writing. The school is currently looking at ways of helping you make even better progress in mathematics. I have asked the headteacher to work with the staff to broaden the work they give you to include more real-life problems to give you greater challenge.

The school is friendly and you get on well with each other. Your behaviour is good. You clearly understand the school's new behaviour policy. You do lots of interesting things, including music and French which are very strong features of the school. Adults care about you and keep a careful eye on the progress that you are making. You have skilled teachers. The second thing I have asked the headteacher to do is to work with staff to plan more opportunities for you to demonstrate your initiative and give you more help in knowing how well you are learning.

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and has developed strong teamwork among all the adults who work in the school. They all share her ambition for the school to continue to improve. You can all help in this process by continuing to work hard, ensuring you all attend regularly and making the most of all that the school provides for you.

Yours sincerely

Roderick Passant  
Lead inspector

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