

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 107546 |
| Local authority | Calderdale |
| Inspection number | 395299 |
| Inspection dates | 16–17 May 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Adrian Guy HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 284 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mgr David Smith |
| Headteacher | Mark Brennan |
| Date of previous school inspection | 7 November 2007 |
| School address | Swires Road Halifax HX1 2ER |
| Telephone number | 01422 362365 |
| Fax number | 01422 255116 |
| Email address | admin@st-marys-halifax.calderdale.sch.uk |



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Introduction

Inspection team

Adrian Guy
Jonathan Woodyatt
Joan Beale

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 23 lessons and one assembly. They observed all 13 teachers in the school; this included a joint observation with the headteacher. Inspectors observed the teaching of reading to small groups as well as listening to individual pupils read. Inspectors held meetings with school staff, members of the governing body, the local authority's representative and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents, such as those relating to the safeguarding of pupils; the teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment and their progress; the school improvement plan and documents identified by the school to support its self-evaluation. Inspectors also took into consideration the 118 questionnaires returned by parents and carers including responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and those returned by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

St Mary's Catholic Primary is slightly larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic background is almost twice the national average as is the percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than the national average. The percentage of pupils joining and leaving the school partway through their education is lower than the national average. There is a before- and after-school care club that is run independently by parents; this was not part of this inspection. Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced a significant turnover of staff as well as a reduction in pupil numbers due to a change to the school's pupil admission number in 2008. In 2011, results from Key Stage 2 assessments were above the government's floor standard, which sets minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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 | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 3 |

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils across the school. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Since the previous inspection attainment in national tests at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics has declined. Action has been taken by senior leaders to halt this decline and there is evidence that some pupils are again beginning to make better progress. However, this progress is not consistent as pupils move through the school.
- Inspectors found evidence of good teaching particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 5 and 6. Here, pupils were highly motivated and engaged actively in their learning. However, they also found weaker teaching where expectations were unclear and teachers' use of assessment information did not move pupils' learning on at a brisk enough pace.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and often better in lessons where they are well taught and enthused about their learning. They are polite and very well-mannered around school. However, in lessons that are less effective, their behaviour can be passive and disengaged. Nearly all pupils say they feel safe at school and agreed that bullying is rare although their awareness of different forms of bullying, for example bullying based on prejudice, is less well developed.
- Senior leaders have been effective in implementing strategies to raise pupils' achievement in mathematics and monitor the progress of pupils across the school. However, the effectiveness of middle leaders in driving school improvement is less well developed. The governing body is supportive and, mindful of previous decline, is developing its ability to challenge and hold the school to account more effectively. This is limited currently by the lack of systems to monitor the school's improvement against identified milestones and hold leaders accountable for progress against identified objectives.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and improve pupils' progress in English and mathematics to be at least good by:
 - increasing the proportion of pupils making good and better progress in all classes
 - ensuring pupils are fully engaged in their learning and that activities are challenging and accurately matched to their needs so that their learning moves forward at a brisk pace.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better throughout the school by:
 - developing teachers' use of questioning and ongoing assessment of pupils' learning to ensure that lessons are adjusted to meet pupils' needs more effectively
 - ensuring teachers make sure all pupils understand clearly what they are expected to learn and are shown what they need to do to achieve successful outcomes.

- Further develop the roles of middle leaders and the governing body by:
 - enabling middle leaders to take greater responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of strategies for improving teaching and pupils' progress
 - ensuring the governing body is able to monitor improvement against identified milestones and hold all leaders to account for achieving ambitious targets.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress, particularly in their personal and social development from their starting points which for many are just below those expected for their age. Consequently, by the time they leave the Reception Year their outcomes are broadly average. Although some pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1 the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. As a result, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 is also broadly average. In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress is not consistent across all year groups. This has affected pupils' attainment which, since the previous inspection, has declined to broadly average levels and in mathematics dipped to below average in 2011. The school has implemented a programme of interventions which has addressed this issue and the school's own information shows pupils' progress in mathematics has begun to improve. Where pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, make better progress, for example in Years 5 and 6, it is because they receive consistently good teaching which accurately meets their needs and challenges them to improve.

Pupils are encouraged in their enjoyment of reading through a range of interesting reading materials in the school library and classrooms. Pupils' progress in reading is supported by the school's regular focus on letters and sounds in Reception and Key Stage 1. For example, they showed great enjoyment as they hunted with a magnifying glass around the classroom for words that contained certain letter patterns which they recorded on a clipboard when they had found them. Pupils in Year 2 are confident in applying phonic skills (letters and the

sounds they make) when attempting to read words which they find difficult. In reading sessions, pupils cooperate well in activities where they are not working directly with an adult but their progress slows because activities are not always challenging enough. In 2011, pupils' attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 was at average levels.

In response to variations in pupils' achievement, the school closely monitors the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. Although there is no identifiable trend for any of these groups, the school is aware of 'pockets' of underachievement in different subjects and year groups. Equally, the school can point to areas of rapid progress, for example, pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs in Year 6.

Quality of teaching

Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Although most of the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire felt that their child was well-taught, inspectors found a wide variation in the quality of teaching. They observed some good teaching in the majority of year groups; however, they also saw satisfactory teaching and a small proportion that was inadequate. This was confirmed by the school's own monitoring records and is reflected in the progress pupils make.

In the more effective lessons, teachers use a range of strategies to engage and stimulate pupils. For example, in a Year 6 lesson pupils debated whether the rich should share their wealth. The pupils were animated as they advocated opposing views and listened to and challenged different arguments demonstrating high levels of cooperation and thoughtful, well-considered responses. The teacher skilfully extended this to include aspects of geography in widening the debate to whether different countries should share their wealth. This is an example of how strong teaching uses the school's broad curriculum to underpin learning and develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

However, in the less successful lessons, teachers were often unclear about what pupils were expected to learn and opportunities to demonstrate clearly what successful outcomes would look like, and how pupils could achieve them, were missed. At times, teachers talked too much and their use of questions was ineffective. As a result, pupils were too passive in their learning and some became disinterested and their behaviour declined. Although teachers planned activities for different groups, including pupils with special educational needs, these did not meet their needs sufficiently and there was too little challenge. This meant that the pace of learning was too slow and pupils did not learn enough.

In lessons where teachers make effective use of marking and assessment to adjust learning, this has a positive impact on pupils' progress. For example, in a Year 5 lesson on using timetables the teacher had identified a common misconception from marking pupils' previous work. This was clearly and simply demonstrated to pupils who were then shown a strategy to avoid making this error in the future. However, there is inconsistency in the use of feedback to pupils and inspectors also found pupils who did not understand the marking and feedback they had been given which consequently had no impact on their progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils', parents' and carers' views on behaviour were generally positive but pupils felt it could be even better. The pupils make a strong contribution to making the school a caring,

considerate and friendly environment. The strength of pupils' social and moral development is demonstrated in the way they contribute to each other's learning by working cooperatively in small groups during lessons. Through their discussions and by explaining their ideas, they contribute to developing each other's understanding and knowledge. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils engaged in lively discussions which deepened their understanding of people's roles, rights and responsibilities in relation to manufacturing sportswear for the Olympics.

Most parents, carers and pupils, including those interviewed by inspectors, were confident that bullying was rare and that it was dealt with effectively by the school. However, a very small proportion of pupils who completed the survey felt the school did not deal effectively with bullying. Inspectors scrutinised logs and case studies related to pupils' behaviour and found that, where issues had been reported, staff went to great lengths to support pupils and resolve issues effectively. However, these issues were not logged and monitored systematically. The school has participated in anti-bullying week and some pupils had prepared short plays to communicate anti-bullying messages. However, their understanding of other forms of bullying, for example, bullying based on prejudice, were less well developed. Pupils were aware of being safe when using the internet and road safety and aspects of safe behaviour were included into a circle time for pupils in the Reception class.

Leadership and management

The school has experienced significant change in senior leadership since the previous inspection. Since their appointment senior leaders have identified the correct priorities and appropriate strategies which needed to be implemented for school improvement. These are beginning to have an impact across the school and raise achievement for all pupils. For example, training and interventions have begun to produce improvements in mathematics and more rigorous tracking of pupils' progress and attainment is enabling leaders to hold teachers to account for the progress being made by pupils. They are developing the roles of middle leaders and acknowledge that aspects of their work are not embedded across the school. However, leaders' accountability for delivering improvements is limited by development planning which does not set clear enough, quantifiable, ambitious targets or milestones to drive and measure improvement.

Members of the governing body are highly committed to the school. They are beginning to hold the school to account more effectively due to the increased analysis of information shared by the senior leaders. They acknowledge that they have not held the school to account for the underachievement in previous years. However, they are developing aspects of accountability, for example in the more rigorous scrutiny of performance management, but this is yet to be extended to include greater involvement in monitoring the impact of leaders at all levels. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and leaders promote equality and tackle discrimination. However, the school's equality plan has yet to extend this work to include all characteristics required by legislation. Good links with external agencies are used well to overcome any barriers pupils face in their learning or their attendance.

The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and contributes to pupils' satisfactory achievement. It is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities including, martial arts, gardening, orchestra and a signing choir. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven into all aspects of the school's work and is a strength. Relationships with parents and carers are managed very effectively. They speak

positively about the school and value the work of the staff. As one parent commented, 'All staff members are approachable and willing to listen [and] have always been very supportive.' Regular newsletters and use of text messaging, emails and the school's website enable them to know what is going on in school, and nearly all parents and carers think the school keeps them well-informed.

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 | 54 | 42 | 2 | 2 |
| Primary schools | 14 | 49 | 32 | 6 |
| Secondary schools | 20 | 39 | 34 | 7 |
| Special schools | 33 | 45 | 20 | 3 |
| Pupil referral units | 9 | 55 | 28 | 8 |
| All schools | 16 | 47 | 31 | 6 |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Attendance | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance. |
| Behaviour | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Floor standards | the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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: | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. |
| 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. |
| Safety | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning. |

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.



18 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Halifax, HX1 2ER

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. As you know we came to see how well you were doing and what you said helped us with our findings.

St Mary's is a satisfactory school and we could tell that you are proud of your school. From conversations with you it is clear that most of you feel safe in school and you know who to turn to if you have a problem. We agree that the adults in your school take good care of you. Your achievement is satisfactory and you enjoy learning particularly when your lessons are exciting and you are given interesting and challenging things to do. The headteacher, teachers and governing body are committed to doing their best to make sure that the school keeps getting better.

It is our job to find out how schools can be even better. These are the things we have agreed with your headteacher that your school should work on next:

- improve your achievement in English and mathematics and make sure you all make better progress
- make sure everybody receives good teaching
- develop the effectiveness of leadership and management.

Remember, you can all play your part by working hard and continuing to attend school as often as possible. The inspectors wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy
Her Majesty's Inspector

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