

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100636
Local Authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	276359
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2006
Reporting inspector	Barnard Payne

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 on roll	
School	345
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Ralph Heskett
Headteacher	Miss Karen Pluckrose
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2000
School address	Crescent Lane Clapham London SW4 9QJ
Telephone number	020 7622 5479
Fax number	020 7720 1569

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's is a larger-than-average inner-city primary school. It has a large catchment area that includes some high levels of deprivation. Pupils are from a wide range of backgrounds. Many pupils have a first language other than English. Many pupils arrive with little or no English; some have had no previous experience of formal education.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Mary's is an outstanding school. Because the school is so effective in recognising pupils' needs and supporting them, they become confident in managing changes in their lives and develop the knowledge, skills and understanding to become very effective learners. While attainment on entry is broadly average in many aspects, this masks the complexities of pupils' needs. For example, the school's provision of lessons in pupils' first languages recognises the positive impact this has on developing their English. Achievement and standards in the school are outstanding. Due to making good progress in the Nursery, Reception and Years 1 and 2, pupils do well in the national tests at the end of Year 2, reaching standards that are in line with national standards. Their rapid progress leads to excellent achievement by the end of Year 6, where standards in 2006 were well above average. Progress in English is particularly strong.

Pupils have excellent attitudes, behaviour and levels of attendance. They co-operate extremely well. They report very favourably on how much they enjoy school and are excellent ambassadors for it. Pupils feel very safe from bullying, racism or others forms of discrimination. They are confident that they can confide in and gain strong support from staff. They have an excellent understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. Pupils have excellent relationships with adults and each other, and demonstrate a high level of social responsibility. They make impressive progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and in other qualities that will be required in the future.

Teaching is outstanding and teachers plan activities that make learning enjoyable and challenging. There is some inspirational teaching that enables pupils to achieve both their academic and personal development targets. Effective deployment of a variety of support staff ensures that all groups of pupils are well catered for. The school provides an impressive range of learning opportunities for pupils, enabling them to excel in practical and physical activities as well as other areas of learning.

The school's leadership and management are outstanding and underpin the school's strong values and a very successful focus on achievement. Because the school leadership is clear about its aims, teachers and other staff are clear about their roles, leading to consistently high quality. Governors are effective; they hold the school to account and have high aspirations.

The school successfully lives up to its strong, Christian values and mission statement, which includes providing and;quot;... an orderly, stimulating environment in which effort and personal success are rewarded, special gifts are catered for and needs are met.and;quot;

What the school should do to improve further

- To build on the school's strengths to ensure the consistency of pupils' achievement over time.
- To continue to use self-evaluation to identify appropriate issues for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement and standards in the school are outstanding. Pupils start school with attainment that is broadly average for their age. They make good progress in the nursery and reception classes. The progress they make by the time they complete Year 2 is also good. Pupils make rapid progress in Years 3 to 6. Those with a first language other than English, and those who

have special educational needs, receive a high level of effective support and consequently make outstanding progress. A very strong emphasis on developing pupils' understanding of language and literacy means that pupils make particularly good progress in English. In 2005, the school's national test results dipped and were disappointing for the school. However, direct and robust action has been taken to ensure that all pupils, including higher attaining pupils, reach the standards of which they are capable. The results in the end of Key Stage 2 tests in 2006 show that pupils' achievement is outstanding in English, mathematics and science. The school invariably meets or exceeds its targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding, reflecting the strong ethos of care within the school. A parent said and;quot;This school provides social education that you can't buy!and;quot; Pupils greatly enjoy their work and the many activities that enrich their experience in school. Pupils are highly motivated as shown by their good attendance. Children in the Foundation Stage settle quickly, make great strides in their personal, social and emotional development and develop positive attitudes to learning. They develop self-confidence and good collaborative skills as a result of the opportunities teachers provide for them to become independent and to work well with others. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Assemblies and circle time make a strong contribution to pupils' excellent spiritual development. They learn very effectively how to reflect on their feelings and emotions. Pupils' excellent cultural development is significantly enhanced by the wide range of arts and musical activities in school.

Pupils are proud of their school and their contribution to its success. The school represents the views of pupils very well and they point to the 'healthy tuck shop' and 'playground buddies' as examples of how well the school takes notice of their views. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the wider community through raising money for charity and the school is often used as a resource by local and national charities to promote their work. Pupils' excellent progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology and their well-developed social skills and attitudes to work mean that they are well-prepared for the next stage of their education. The school has identified as a priority increasing pupil participation in school improvement by developing the role of the school council.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Pupils thrive in the school environment and make excellent progress. In a Year 5 music lesson, the teacher's very high expectations of the pupils, their high level of participation and outstanding levels of confidence and mutual support lead to outstanding achievement. Teachers know their subjects well and provide a wide variety of activities that interest learners and help them to develop their learning skills. In a Year 5/6 mathematics lesson, the pupils were inspired to take risks, and make outstanding progress, because the teaching was very well planned to meet a range of needs and the resources were immaculately presented and organised. The school's capacity to meet all pupils' needs is significantly increased through the use of bilingual staff and by the skilled specialist teaching of vulnerable children and those identified as underachieving. As a result, these pupils are very

well equipped to meet challenges. Assessment is thorough and accurate. Pupils are usefully involved in assessing their own knowledge and understanding. In many classes, there is clear individual target setting and very effective teacher-pupil dialogue recorded in exercise books. It is not as well established in some other classes where, although work is marked and commented upon, these comments are less likely to help pupils in improving their work. The school works very hard to build strong, supportive relationships with parents to help involve them effectively in their children's school work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum and the range of other activities provided by the school are outstanding. The school goes significantly beyond statutory requirements to ensure that the school serves the needs of all groups of learners. Its provision of home-language lessons and support for pupils with learning difficulties shows a school very strongly responsive to local needs. Provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT is excellent. Parents feel that the school is very successful in preparing pupils for secondary school. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the learning opportunities offered, both during the school day and after school. Provision for the arts and sport is outstanding and makes a very significant contribution to pupils' personal development.

As part of its self-evaluation, the school has identified the need to monitor and evaluate the quality and impact of home-language sessions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's provision for care, guidance and support is outstanding. In a poem, a pupil wrote and;quot;Not only are you my school but you are also my friend.and;quot; Parents are full of praise for this aspect of the school's work, which strongly reflects the school's Christian values. Staff follow rigorous systems for child protection and for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare. As a result, pupils feel safe and say that there is always someone to turn to if they have concerns. Playground buddies add to their feeling of security and well-being. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties are assessed at an early stage and effective teaching programmes put in place to meet them. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution. Teachers make very effective use of assessment data to follow pupils' progress and to set challenging targets for improvement.

In order to continue improving its care, guidance and support, the school is investigating the possibility of introducing mentoring or other systems to support the pupils' emotional development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is very well supported by the deputy headteacher and senior management team. Together they promote a stable, very caring and supportive Catholic ethos and are committed to improving standards. Clear emphasis on collective responsibility ensures that senior and middle leaders are fully accountable for their areas. Their impact is apparent in the outstanding quality of teaching and very high standards. The exemplary relationships within the staff team enable the school's performance to be monitored in a positive,

supportive and non-judgemental way. The school has an accurate view of its performance and is able to identify priorities for future development. Governors are experienced, knowledgeable, and supportive of the school's work and monitor and evaluate its work very effectively. They hold the school to account for the standards it achieves. They effectively seek the views of parents to inform their own decision making.

Outstanding teamwork exists at all levels and ensures a consistent approach and high expectations. Exemplary systems have been developed to check the effectiveness of the teaching and how well innovations are being implemented. The school has a very realistic view of its performance and is able to identify where it needs to improve.

The school's track record of improvement shows that it is very well placed to improve in the future. School improvement planning is exceptional and focused on actions to improve pupils' learning with measurable indicators to evaluate success. The senior management team have excellent systems for interpreting pupils' performance data and using it to set school strategies. The school is planning further whole-staff training on compiling and interpreting data in order to make the tracking of pupils' progress even more effective.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for your help when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and watching you work. You made us feel welcome and we were very impressed with how polite and considerate you are.

You told us that you really enjoy coming to school and what a good school you think it is. We are pleased to tell you that we agree with you. St Mary's is an outstanding school and provides you with a high quality of education. You have excellent opportunities to develop your skills in all subjects, because you have very creative and exciting things to do. You receive excellent teaching so you learn very well. Your teachers and other staff take great care of you and make sure that your work is challenging. You try hard to get things right, and show great interest and enthusiasm, so you achieve high standards. We know that your headteacher and all other staff do an excellent job in organising the school's work to help you to achieve so well. We were very impressed by your very positive attitudes to learning, your excellent behaviour and your willingness to concentrate on your work. We know that you understand the importance of staying safe and healthy and that taking part in a wide range of physical activities helps you to stay healthy.

Your school is always looking for ways to get even better. The teachers and other staff have worked hard to help you achieve high standards. We have asked the school look at all the ways it can continue to help you to do well in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Barnard PayneLead Inspector