

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114570
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	289973
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Clive Lewis

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Lang
Headteacher	Joyce Jones
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2001
School address	Church Road Portslade Brighton BN41 1LB
Telephone number	01273 418416
Fax number	01273 421680

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's is an average-sized school which takes its pupils from a wide catchment area. A number of pupils with limited or no English and/or significant learning disabilities have arrived in the school in the last few years. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and learning English as an additional language is higher than that found nationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Mary's is a good school with some outstanding features. It provides a wellbalanced education for its pupils, with outstanding provision for personal development that has a positive impact on all aspects of their development. Pupils' achievement is good and standards are above average. Children enter the Reception Year with levels of attainment below those typically found. Because of the good provision, they make good progress and, as a result, standards at the start of Year 1 are broadly in line with expectations. Although the high level of pupil mobility has in the recent past impacted on the school's overall standards, this good progress continues throughout Years 1 to 6. Currently, standards at the age of seven are above national averages in reading and mathematics, and average in writing. By the end of Year 6, standards are well above average in English and information and communication technology (ICT). Standards are broadly average in mathematics and science, although the number of pupils reaching the higher levels is lower than found nationally. All pupils benefit from consistently good teaching and, as a result, they take part with real enthusiasm and become confident learners. They thoroughly enjoy school, as seen by their attendance, which has steadily improved and is above national levels. Relationships are very good and play a key role in the excellent progress pupils make in their personal development. The school has effective systems to support newcomers, who are made to feel very welcome so that they quickly settle in and do well at the school. Pupils are provided with a good curriculum that includes a good emphasis on physical activities. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills, particularly in science and mathematics. The provision for care, guidance and support is good overall. Pastoral care is outstanding; staff care for the pupils very well and there is a very strong ethos of inclusion. Although academic guidance is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection, there is room for more consistency in the setting of individual targets. The school works well in partnership with others and links with the local community are similarly good. Parents' views are overwhelmingly positive, with one commenting, 'The environment of the school always appears to be calm and ordered, supporting children's development both socially and academically'. A key to the school's success is the good leadership and management, with inspirational direction from the headteacher. Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection and the school has a good capacity to make the necessary improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in science and mathematics by developing more regular opportunities for pupils to develop their independent and investigative skills.
- Develop more consistent whole-school strategies for Individual pupil targets so that pupils have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and reach above-average standards. Pupils achieve well because the school has taken outstanding steps to make sure that all pupils' needs are met. Attainment on entry to the Reception class is below average, particularly in communication and language skills. Provision for Reception children is consistently good and, as a result, children achieve well. The majority reach the nationally expected goals for children of that age by the end of the Reception year. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 6 because of good teaching. Standards by

Year 2 are above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing. Standards by the end of Year 6 are well above average in English, and average in mathematics and science. Standards in English throughout the school have improved significantly following the school's sustained focus on writing, and, given the low levels of attainment in language and literacy skills on entry to the school, this constitutes very good progress. Standards in ICT, which were a key issue at the time of the last inspection, are now well above average throughout the school. Standards in music are also outstanding. Pupils with learning difficulties and those joining at a later stage make good progress because they benefit from good support that is well matched to their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils very much enjoy school and, as a result, their attendance is above average. Pupils' social development is outstanding and they have very good relationships with all the staff and each other. Their outstanding moral development means that behaviour both in lessons and around the school is exemplary. All pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They are attentive in lessons and contribute their own ideas with confidence. Even the youngest children use their initiative well. Pupils contribute well to the school community. They very much enjoy being part of the school council. One pupil commented on how much they had enjoyed having tea with the Mayor. Older pupils are given opportunities to take responsibility for aspects of school life, such as acting as 'Playground Buddies'. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is also outstanding and pupils have a good understanding of the different cultures found in the school and in the country. Pupils are knowledgeable about the need to eat healthily and take regular exercise. At lunchtime, healthy food is served and pupils are encouraged to bring healthy snacks. They take part in physical activities with enthusiasm and are justly proud of their achievements. Pupils feel safe in school and do not think bullying is a problem. Pupils feel safe and know what to do if they are upset. Good development of pupils' basic skills and their willingness to work alongside one another show they are well prepared for their future economic wellbeing.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are typically lively and full of pace and challenge, so that pupils are motivated and learn well. As a result, attitudes and behaviour are good. Writing tasks are carefully chosen to appeal to boys as well as girls and teachers work hard to ensure pupils understand basic mathematical and writing concepts. Teachers provide a good mix of support and assessment for pupils joining the school part-way through their education and this helps these pupils to quickly begin to make good progress. They organise teaching groups carefully so that all pupils get work at the right level to help them achieve as well as they can. Teaching in all classes, including the Reception year, is good. Pupils with learning difficulties benefit from good support from teachers and teaching assistants so that they are helped to make good progress. Marking is up to date and thorough but does not consistently provide pupils with enough information about what they could do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum, many aspects of which are exciting and reflect the interests of the pupils. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their independent and investigative skills in mathematics and science. In the Reception class the curriculum enables children to learn through first-hand experiences both inside and outside. Daily routines are used well to enable children to extend their learning. The school has ensured that all aspects of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda are increasingly being covered. There is outstanding provision for the use of ICT, with many links to other curriculum areas. Support staff make a significant contribution to the school's lively and stimulating environment. Regular educational visits along with visitors to the school help to extend and enhance the pupils' learning. The provision of music is outstanding; pupils perform with enthusiasm and are led by a magnificent school choir.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Arrangements to ensure children are safe and healthy are very good. Procedures for child protection are all in place and effective and risk assessments are carefully attended to. A significant strength of the school is the very supportive system of pastoral welfare, based on the school's strong Christian ethos, which contributes well to pupils' enjoyment and well-being. The needs of pupils learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported very well by a highly skilled team of dedicated staff. Good links are made with other professionals and services to promote the care and welfare of pupils. Academic guidance is good. Teachers regularly monitor the performance of pupils, and the school responds rapidly if any pupil appears not to be making expected progress. However, discussions with pupils confirm that there are variations across the school in how well teachers ensure that all pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has overseen significant improvements to the school's systems since she joined the school. For example, provision for ICT, a weakness at the time of the previous inspection, has improved significantly and the school has been recognised nationally for the quality of its provision. She leads a very well-motivated team of colleagues who provide a clearly shared vision for the whole school. Teamwork is evident in all the school's initiatives and all staff members contribute fully to their planning and development. The school's work is evaluated continuously and rigorously and this is leading to exciting new developments in the curriculum. Subject leaders have a clear grasp of how lessons are taught and how pupils' learning needs are to be supported in some areas. The governing body provides good support to the school. Governors are involved in all the school's activities and question and challenge where needed. The school takes very good account of the views of parents and other stakeholders. This is reflected in turn in the very positive view that parents have of the school, with one parent writing: 'The school seems to get better as each year passes'. Because school self-evaluation is rigorous and because of the track record of improvements in teaching, standards in English

and information and communication technology, attendance and personal development, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

- 12 July 2007 Dear Pupils Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary, Portslade, East Sussex BN41 1LB I would like to thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. My colleague and I very much enjoyed our visit. St Mary's is a good school with some outstanding features. You told us that you really like school and there are lots of things to do and enjoy. We agree with you. Your behaviour is excellent and you work hard and try to succeed in all that you do. Your headteacher and staff run the school well and enable you to learn well and really enjoy your lessons. Your teachers are very skilled at providing you with really interesting activities and in helping you all to make good progress. As a result, you reach high standards in English, information and communication technology and music by Year 6. All staff make sure you understand how to look after yourselves and keep safe, and you do this extremely well. We have asked your school to do two things to make it even better:
 - Help you to do better in mathematics and science by giving you lots more chances to do your own investigations and carry out experiments.
 - Give you more guidance on how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve. We are confident that, with your help, the school will improve still further. I wish you well in your future education. Yours faithfully Clive Lewis Lead Inspector