

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118195
<b>Local Authority</b>	Isle of Wight
<b>Inspection number</b>	312842
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Kath Beck

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	144
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Kevin Doran
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jo Anderson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 June 2003
<b>School address</b>	Amphill Road Ryde PO33 1LJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01983 562000
<b>Fax number</b>	01983 810681

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

St Mary's Catholic Primary is a small voluntary aided school serving the community of Ryde. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage. A very small number of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds; few are at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below that normally found. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average.

In April 2006, the school was federated with St. Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School in Newport under one governing body. The executive headteacher for both schools took up her post in September 2007. The partner school was inspected in the summer of 2006. In the past two years, there have been a significant number of changes of staff, including at senior management level. There are difficulties with recruitment in the area. A number of teachers are part-time. The school is working with a professional artist in a creative partnership to develop the school grounds as an outside classroom.

## 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 that provides good value for money. Through the period of significant change and staff turnover the focus of the governors and staff remained strongly on enabling pupils to enjoy their education, and to achieve well in relation to their starting points throughout the school. This reflects good leadership. The school has also worked really well with outside agencies to promote children's well being. The good level of pupils' achievement and spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding has been brought about by the introduction of innovative and creative initiatives. These challenge pupils' thinking skills and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. These factors, together with teaching that responds to pupils' thirst for knowledge, means pupils are willing to face new learning with confidence and express their ideas freely. As a result, more able children achieve well, particularly in writing. Standards have risen since 2003 and, in Year 2, are above average in reading and mathematics and well above average in writing. Pupils in Year 4 leave the school with good skills in literacy and numeracy and this is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Staff take time to find out how pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities learn best and design tasks especially for them so they, too, achieve well.

An outstanding curriculum, stemming from the creative partnership, incorporates and develops pupils' skills in teamwork, cooperation and collaboration as well as literacy and numeracy and those needed to reach high standards in art, drama and music. These skills stand pupils in good stead for their future economic life.

Pupils are well behaved, attentive in lessons, act sensibly and safely and show caring attitudes to each other around the school. Attendance rates that are above average reflect pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils have contributed well to the school and wider community through their work to improve the grounds. The new school council is beginning to represent the views of others. Pupils eat healthily in school and enjoy active lifestyles. They are cared for well, so they feel secure, and their individual needs known. Teachers set and use challenging targets effectively to help pupils do well. They meet with parents to discuss the targets set and how they can help their children to improve. However, pupils, while aware of their targets do not always understand fully what they need to do to improve.

The majority of parents are supportive of the school. One said that 'St Mary's is a happy school that really promotes an ethic of caring between the children'. Another said her child has 'excelled and really enjoys the nature work and work with the artist'. That said, a significant proportion of parents are concerned that their views are not listened to. They are also concerned about recent staff turnover and the number of teachers that their child may encounter over a week through job shares and staff absence, which unsettles them. The senior managers and governors share these concerns and action is underway to deal with them.

The new headteacher and senior managers have commenced a rigorous review of all aspects of the school. They have identified the school's strengths and key priorities for improvement, and secured the commitment and determination of staff to make the school an outstanding one in the future. The school has a good capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good. Good teaching is enabling children to reach and in some cases exceed the learning goals expected of five-year-olds. Children enjoy the imaginative challenges offered to develop their writing skills. They were particularly keen to write to a character in a book who had lost some of his possessions to tell him they had found the items in the wood and that they were safe. Children who are more able can write simple sentences independently. Songs and rhymes help them to know the names and sounds of letters in a way that captures their interest. A wide range of role-play and creative practical activities enhances children's progress in mathematical, creative and physical developments. Very good use of the nearby natural area enhances significantly children's knowledge and understanding of the world. The strong emphasis on their personal, social and emotional development means children work well together, help each other and develop confidence in learning to read, write and speak confidently.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Enable pupils to understand clearly the targets they are set to improve their work.
- Review staffing arrangements so that pupils do not experience too many changes of teachers each week.
- Strengthen communications and the partnership with parents.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The children start in the Foundation Stage with levels of knowledge and skills that are similar to those usually found at this age. They make good progress as they move through the school and reach above average standards by the time they leave in Year 4. Standards are above average in Year 2, with particular strengths in writing in national tests. Standards have risen year-on-year because the school uses innovative approaches that give pupils confidence to try out their ideas and learn and apply key skills confidently. In the past year, the school has prioritised developments in mathematics and this has proved particularly beneficial to pupils in Years 3 and 4. Pupils who are more able are challenged successfully to do well. Those with learning difficulties or disabilities receive tasks that suit and support the way they like to learn effectively so they play a full part in lessons and also achieve well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are enthusiastic about school and behave well, allowing learning to proceed calmly. They care for each other in a friendly way and collaborate and work together well as a team. These features stem from the high expectations of staff and are reinforced by their work with a professional artist linked to the natural elements of the school grounds. Pupils helped to design the willow domes, sculptures and camera obscura as well as plant the willow farm. The use of this valuable resource means pupils have a strong sense of the beauty of nature, and knowledge of the role of an artist and art from other parts of the world.

Pupils are keen to bring about improvements to the school. The new school council is just taking shape and developing its skills. It has requested changes to the toilets and lunchtime arrangements that are being considered carefully by senior managers. Pupils know how to maintain their fitness and eat healthily. They participate eagerly in sport, music, art and drama,

often linked to work in other subjects such as history and English. They have a good sense of how to stay safe and feel secure in school. One pupil said that whenever she is anxious she asks an adult and her worry is dealt with immediately.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers use innovative and creative approaches to capture pupils' interest and motivate them to do well. Art, drama, music and use of the natural area are used to stimulate ideas for writing or to help pupils understand the application of mathematical skills. Effective questioning and problem solving activities challenge pupils to think through their ideas.

Most teachers know their pupils' needs well and provide individual activities, especially for those with particular learning needs that will enhance their success. Staff plan carefully so that there is continuity in learning whenever there is a change of teacher. The pupils' work reflects consistency in their progress. However, parents are right to be concerned when pupils have several changes of teacher as it makes pupils uneasy and they take time to settle.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The school's work with a professional artist has added an outstanding dimension to the curriculum that enhances significantly pupils' spiritual, moral and social developments. In addition, it has given them a strong sense of purpose in their learning and brought considerable knowledge of the natural world, history and the arts.

Pupils also enjoy a good range of visits to places of interest, visitors to the school and after school activities. Older pupils learn a great deal about living in a community away from home during their residential visit. Original ideas, using skills drawn from subjects across the curriculum promote good achievement for pupils of all abilities.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Parents value the school's strong emphasis on pastoral care and looking after pupils' personal needs in a secure environment. There is good provision to develop pupils' moral, social and decision making skills that impacts positively on pupils' personal development. Child protection, risk assessments and health and safety procedures are appropriate. The school works really well with other agencies to promote pupils' learning and to help them overcome their difficulties. Parents are involved in their children's education through target setting or family learning. However, a significant proportion of parents are concerned about the high turnover of staff and say that their views are not taken into account sufficiently.

An effective system for tracking achievement and setting challenging targets aids pupils' progress, but they do not know enough about what they have to do to improve.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Governors have faced significant challenges in relation to the federation of the two schools and appointment of new staff resolutely. Throughout these changes, leadership and management have remained focused on pupils' interests and standards have continued to rise. New initiatives promoted pupils' thinking skills and confidence to learn effectively.

The rigorous self-review instigated by the newly established senior management team has revealed clear priorities for the school's future development. It has secured the determination of all staff and governors to work as a team to make things even better for the children. Challenging targets are used effectively to bring about higher standards. Weaknesses identified in writing and mathematics in previous years have been overcome as subject leaders monitored developments and their impact on achievement closely. These factors show the school has a good capacity to improve.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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**

19 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Ryde, PO33 1LJ

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to St Mary's earlier this week, and I will remember it for a long time. I am very grateful to the children who showed me around and to the school council for giving me their views of the school. I was glad to hear how much you liked school and how safe and friendly you felt it to be. You were quite right when you told me it was a good school. Your teachers go to a great deal of trouble to make sure you learn as well, and as happily, as you can, and they plan a lot of imaginative work for you. This keeps you interested in lessons, so you try hard and learn a lot in a short time. The work you have done with your visiting artist is exceptional. Congratulations!

You get on well together, and I didn't see anyone behaving badly in all the time I was there, although occasionally some of you take time to settle down to work when teachers change. This is also a concern for some of your parents. The school is looking at ways of reducing the number of times this happens and how it can work with your parents more closely. Sometimes you are uncertain about how you could improve your work, so I am asking your teachers to make this clearer for you; you will be able to learn even faster than! You are very fortunate to have such a strong team working with your headteacher. They are all determined to make this good school even better, but they will need your help. So keep working hard and doing your best.

Yours sincerely

Kath Beck

Lead inspector