

Grantham St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120608
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE LA
Inspection number	313693
Inspection date	20 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Sheelagh Barnes

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	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Helen Pickering
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Heaver
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2005
School address	Sandon Road Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 9AX
Telephone number	01476 562017
Fax number	01476 575596

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspection focused particularly on: teaching, learning, and the impact this has on pupils' achievements and the progress they make; pupils' personal development; and the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation by senior managers and leaders. Evidence was collected in a range of ways. Discussions were held with the headteacher, chair of governors, the school improvement partner and pupils, documents and pupils' work were reviewed, parental questionnaires and data were analysed, and observations made of teaching and learning and of behaviour at lunchtime and playtime.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Mary's Primary School is about the same size as most schools. A well below average proportion of pupils' parents have formally applied for free school meals. Informal school information from parents puts the proportion eligible as significantly higher than this. Pupil mobility is quite high, and a lot of new pupils have joined the school at times other than the start of Reception, particularly in the past couple of years. Although fewer speak English as an additional language than nationally, the proportion is significantly greater than at the time of the previous inspection. The proportion who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below average and the proportion with statements of their need is average. Standards on entry to Reception are overall below those expected for children of this age. The school has achieved Investors In People status twice, Healthy Schools Award, Silver Artsmark Award, Basic Skills Award and NAACE award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that is well led. The headteacher has a good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and leads it effectively. She uses monitoring and evaluation perceptively to identify areas where the school can be more effective and is supported well in this, both by governors and senior staff. Governors fulfil their roles well and are strong supporters of the school. Inspection agrees with the school's evaluation of its current overall effectiveness. The school has maintained its standards and brought about substantial improvements since the previous inspection, despite significant changes to the intake. It provides good value for money and has a good capacity for further improvement.

The provision for pupils' personal development is excellent. As a result, pupils mix together exceptionally well, both in class and out. Behaviour is outstanding and pupils say they enjoy coming to school. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, as is pupils' awareness of how to stay safe. As a result, relationships within the school are very good, little time is wasted and pupils are forthcoming and keen to take on extra responsibilities, such as helping in the playground. They have good knowledge of how to make healthy choices and make a good contribution to both the school, and also the wider community. By ensuring that their standards are secure and their attitudes to learning good, the school prepares them well for the next stage of their learning.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and leads to pupils from all groups making good gains in their learning and achieving well. Standards by the end of Year 6 are at least in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science. Teaching engages the pupils, uses resources such as interactive whiteboards well and sets a good pace for learning. Teachers assess pupils regularly and accurately and use the information well when planning lessons to meet pupils' needs. As a result of this good support and of the good work of the teaching assistants, pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language, achieve well. The school has a policy of sharing with each pupil what it is they need to work on next in their writing and mathematics. However, while this practice is very good in some parts of the school, not all pupils confidently know what their targets are. Most parents are very supportive of the school and pleased with the work it does. However, a minority feels that the school does not give them enough information or take their views sufficiently into account.

The curriculum is good. It covers all required aspects well and is supplemented effectively with a good range of interesting and exciting activities, including sport. However, while pupils write extensively in English lessons, teachers do not always take advantage of the opportunities to improve or apply writing skills that are offered by the other subjects in the curriculum. Marking is regular, but inconsistent in its quality and usefulness.

Pupils are well cared for in school and all the necessary checks are in place to ensure that they stay safe. There are good systems for monitoring pupils' attendance, although attendance itself remains average. This is partly due to a significant minority of parents who take holidays and trips abroad during term time. The monitoring of pupils' progress is effective and the school has good recording and monitoring systems.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The quality of provision for children in the Foundation Stage is excellent. Children enter school with widely varying skills and experiences, which overall are below the standards expected for their age. Very good induction systems enable them to settle into Reception quickly and develop confidence. Staff all work together very effectively and they have created a warm and welcoming ethos. As a result, children settle very quickly to school routines and are keen to work like their friends and siblings. The school builds well on this positive start and children make excellent progress. There is a very good match of the curriculum to the children's needs and good opportunities for physical development with the newly developed outdoor area. Activities are exciting and fully engage children's interest. As a result, they make excellent progress during their time in Reception and often exceed the targets expected for their age when they enter Year 1. Progress is particularly notable in their personal and social development, which is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities for pupils to develop writing skills in subjects other than English
- Use marking consistently to remind and guide pupils on how they can improve and ensure that pupils are more actively involved in setting targets for improvement so that they and their parents know what they need to tackle next.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	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 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

21 November 2007

Dear Children,

Inspection of Grantham St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 9AX

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. The things that are particularly good about your school are:

- You all behave exceptionally well and get on with your work very well.
- You are making good progress in English and mathematics.
- Your teachers plan lessons well so that they are interesting.
- All of the adults in school take good care of you.
- There are a lot of interesting and exciting things to do in school.
- Your head teacher knows a lot about your school and has plans to make it even better.

The things I have asked your school to improve next are:

- To make sure that you get plenty of opportunities to practise your writing skills in other subjects.
- For teachers to let you and your parents know more frequently how well you are doing and what you need to do next to improve.

I really enjoyed meeting you and watching you work and play. I especially enjoyed having lunch with some of you in your classroom. I hope you have a very happy year and wish you all well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Barnes

Lead inspector