

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Falmouth

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112003
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	325507
Inspection date	3 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	205
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matthew Higham
Headteacher	Jacqui Scarborough
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Mongleath Road Falmouth TR11 4PW
Telephone number	01326 314540
Fax number	01326 312251

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the use of assessment and tracking systems to ensure that provision is consistent in meeting the pupils' differing needs
- the degree to which teachers involve pupils independently and collaboratively in their learning
- the ability of leaders and managers to bring about improvement.

Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, assembly and pupils at lunch and play. Teachers' assessment records and pupils' work were scrutinised. Discussions were held with pupils, staff, governors and parents. Parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire were analysed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors 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

This school is broadly average in size. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a designated reception class. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, but is higher than this in some year groups. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school holds Healthy School, Activemark, Primary Quality Mark and Investors in Work Related Learning awards.

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. It is a very caring, inclusive school that truly places the pupil at the heart of everything it does. Because of the inspirational lead of a much-respected headteacher, the school is highly effective in monitoring its performance and in taking the necessary steps to meet the pupils' differing needs. The school's outstanding capacity to bring about improvement is fully illustrated in its creation of an exemplary curriculum. Learning opportunities are developed through topics such as 'Cornwall at Work and Play' that link subjects together. The curriculum is enriched further by a wide range of after-school clubs and visits and by the full use of excellent information and communication technology (ICT) facilities, which stimulate pupils' interest. As a result, all pupils, across the range of abilities and backgrounds, greatly enjoy school and flourish both academically and personally.

Skills are broadly average on entry to the school, but an increasing number of children arrive with lower levels of skill in communication, language and literacy. Children are taught in an exemplary way. They make excellent progress through the school, especially as they maturely learn to use and apply their skills, both individually and cooperatively. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Most pupils are very articulate speakers and many pupils also develop significant skills in the expressive arts. The art on display around the school, for example, illustrates the high quality and breadth of pupils' completed work. The above average standards that pupils attain from their varying starting points indicate that achievement is outstanding.

The care, guidance and support for all pupils by the whole staff team are exemplary and contribute to the pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. Warm, personal pastoral care is supported by robust procedures to safeguard the pupils' welfare. Staff give very effective academic guidance orally, and through marking, especially in English and mathematics. As a consequence, the pupils' behaviour and relationships are excellent in lessons and around the school. Their enthusiastic and safe participation in school and community events and clubs, especially in sports, shows their excellent adoption of healthy lifestyles. Pupils demonstrate an exceptionally mature approach towards taking on responsibilities for themselves and others, for example on the school council and as school bankers, 'playground buddies' and 'learning detectives', when older pupils help younger pupils. The pupils' excellent manners and confidence in approaching each other or adults in school if they have a problem fully reflect their exemplary spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Parents are very appreciative of the school's exemplary qualities and work very supportively with the staff. The pupils' excellent attendance and attitudes to work illustrate how the school's close partnership with parents enriches the pupils' learning. 'Amazing' and 'brilliant' give a flavour of the adjectives used by many parents to describe the school. Other comments within an almost unanimously positive response in the parental questionnaires included, 'Fantastic school. My children are happy and I am happy' and 'An excellent primary school which has educated my children in a loving environment.'

The school has developed very comprehensive systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and is using these very well to tackle pupils' needs and to set challenging targets in order to help raise standards further. The recent strong acceleration in progress in reading, for example, reflects the consistent and successful use of 'Guided Reading' to develop pupils' reading, comprehension, spelling, writing and other language skills.

The high quality of the teaching and learning across the school is typified by warm relationships, high expectations of work and behaviour and challenging questioning. Good and outstanding teaching has a cumulative and beneficial effect in promoting pupils' excellent attitudes to learning. All staff encourage pupils to become effective, independent and cooperative learners. They do this by inviting and valuing pupils' ideas during class discussions, 'Hot Seat' questioning of individual pupils and by encouraging paired work as 'Talking Partners'. The school's much-improved ICT facilities are also well used to enable individual research on topics such as 'The Aztecs'. The way that staff involve pupils in evaluating their own and each other's work in English and mathematics is a particular strength. 'Target Time', for example, when pupils think about their individual targets and seek to make the necessary improvements, plays a key role in lifting standards. The pupils really enjoy this form of learning and visibly show a pride in their work, a determination to seek improvement and a willingness to work with others to the greater good. Whilst pupils assess their work to a varying degree in other subjects, this self-evaluation is not yet as consistent or as successful as it is in English and mathematics.

The school's excellent leadership and management are clearly evident in the shared unity of purpose of the headteacher, senior staff and governors. Together they provide an exceptionally clear vision for the future and strongly promote the school's community ethos. Governors also play a key role in providing continuity and in sustaining close links with parents. Leaders and managers, including governors, promote community cohesion extremely well. Established strengths in promoting local and international aspects of community were evident in the 'New Life and Good News' assembly led by Year 2 pupils and were much valued by the many relatives in attendance. The school also places a very good emphasis on promoting our national community. This is developed, for example, through School Council meetings with Members of Parliament to discuss citizenship, a visit to the 'Comic Relief' headquarters to examine national needs and pupils' investigations of Britain's business and enterprise activities. By these means St Mary's holds a respected place of calm and continuity at the centre of its community where pupils become lively, engaged young citizens undertaking their responsibilities. When they leave, pupils are extremely well prepared for the future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Reception staff provide excellent leadership and pastoral care and have consistent, high expectations of children's enjoyment and behaviour. These qualities are readily recognised by newcomers to the school, both children and their parents, lifting their confidence in what can be achieved. As a result, children's personal, social and emotional development is outstanding. Excellent teaching, warm encouragement and a carefully planned programme of well-balanced adult-led or child-chosen, practical learning activities support the children's exceptional progress in all areas of learning. By the time they enter Year 1, most children either reach or exceed the standards normally expected. The much-improved and extremely well-equipped indoor and outdoor facilities enable children to freely choose from a wide range of learning activities. The children make their choices confidently in the full knowledge that caring, questioning adults are there to interact and support. As a result, all children become independent and cooperative learners. Staff assess the children's progress very accurately and are quick to tackle areas in need of improvement. This year for example, the children's use of words and their understanding of the world have been targeted and lifted significantly. Exemplars of how this has been accomplished were evident in the deep interest children showed when discussing their recreation

of a snow scene from a popular Little Red Train story book and when adults enter the 'Endeavour Space Shuttle' role play to join them in conversation on their 'journey through space'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase pupils' involvement in evaluating their own and each other's work and in setting targets across the range of subjects, to be in line with the high quality evident in English and mathematics.

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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?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

3 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Falmouth TR11 4PW

We really enjoyed our visit to your school and would like to thank you for your warm welcome and for talking to us about your work. You told us how much you enjoy being at school and that you always feel safe and very well looked after. We were particularly impressed by your excellent behaviour and by the way you work hard and support each other in lessons. We agree with you and your parents that St Mary's is an outstanding school.

These are the other main things we found:

- You attain above average standards and do particularly well in writing and speaking and listening, where standards are even higher.
- You make outstanding progress because teaching is excellent and you benefit from very interesting learning activities. By the time you leave you are extremely well prepared for the future.
- The staff take excellent care of you. You respond confidently to their very supportive example, make excellent contributions to school activities and clearly show that you know how to keep safe and healthy.
- Your headteacher provides outstanding leadership and receives excellent support from staff and governors. They work very closely with your parents to help you to achieve your best.

Even the best of schools can improve and so we have identified one main thing for the teachers to do that would help you to achieve even more.

- As your teachers already do in English and mathematics, involve you more in evaluating your own and each other's work and in setting improvement targets in the other subjects

You can help by checking all the work that you do to see if you can improve it.

Thank you again for your kind assistance and best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully Alex Baxter

Lead inspector