

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116394
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	326380
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2009
Reporting inspector	John Earish

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	257
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Read (Acting)
Headteacher	Miss Carol McIvor
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 October 2005
School address	Anns Hill Road Gosport PO12 3NB
Telephone number	02392 583979
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited ten lessons as well as observing pupils at other times and discussing their work with them. Meetings were held with the headteacher, governors, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including the school's assessment and tracking systems to monitor the progress of pupils, the pupils' work in their books and in displays, school policies and supporting documentation and 52 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. The team looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement of pupils in English, mathematics and science, particularly those of higher ability and those who find learning difficult
- the quality and consistency of teaching across the school and the demands it places on these groups of pupils
- the impact of managers at all levels in ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching and learning so that pupils can make rapid progress in both their academic and personal development
- the extent to which pupils are able to assess for themselves how well they are learning and how the school supports them to do this.

Information about the school

This average sized primary school admits pupils from a variety of social backgrounds. Most of the Reception children join the school each September full-time from a range of pre-school settings. The vast majority of pupils are White British. A small number come from minority ethnic backgrounds and are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is just below that of most schools nationally. Most of these pupils need additional support in lessons and have moderate learning or emotional and social difficulties, or have specific physical disabilities to do with mobility. The proportion eligible for free school meals is below the national average. About ten per cent of the pupils are from service families stationed at nearby military bases. The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Healthy School Status. As a voluntary aided Catholic school, there are close links with the local parish church and community.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school that is well led and managed. Pupils achieve well and enjoy learning, which is reflected in their good attendance. The strong leadership of the headteacher has created a calm, orderly and purposeful learning environment where all adults and children are equally valued. She has worked well in partnership with staff and governors to improve the consistency of good teaching and to make fuller use of assessment data to match work to different ability groups when planning lessons. This underpins the school's success and is reflected in the good quality of care and support that pupils receive.

Achievement is good and standards are securely above average overall and in some years they are well above average. This is much better than at the time of the last inspection. Children make a good start to their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They start school with skills and abilities that are just below those expected for the age group. They make good progress and most reach the standards expected for their age group by the start of Year 1. This good progress continues in Years 1 to 6 because pupils are well taught and eager to learn. Standards are above average overall by the end of Year 2. However, there is some variation in the rate of pupils' progress across this key stage. The best progress is made in reading and writing. The proportion of able pupils reaching the higher Level 3 in mathematics does not match that reached in the other two subjects. Standards are securely above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Those pupils who find learning difficult and the very few who are learning English as an additional language are fully included in all learning activities. They are well supported and make good progress against their starting points in school.

Progress is good overall because the quality of teaching is good. Teachers are making good use of assessment information to match work to individual pupils' needs and to set targets to help them to improve. Pupils make good progress during lessons because teachers have high expectations of how much they can achieve, and pupils fully understand the targets they are set. However, there are still occasions when teachers miss opportunities for higher attaining pupils to explore their own ideas or do not give them enough time to do so.

Pupils are well behaved, polite and courteous. They show initiative and feel safe knowing that the staff will listen and respect their views. Older pupils act as peer mentors and good role models to support younger children. The school council is

successful and active on behalf of all pupils. The pupils say they enjoy school, feel safe and part of a large family. One pupil, representing the views of many said 'Learning is fun and the teachers are always there to help you make you work even better'.

Leadership and management are good overall and have secured sustained improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher leads by example and her teachers support her well. Self-evaluation involves staff at all levels and provides an accurate diagnosis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, priorities for improvement within the development plan are clear, appropriate and well focused. Middle managers are not yet as effective at influencing the quality of teaching and learning across the school to ensure consistently good or better progress in all classes. Governors are good at supporting, guiding and challenging the school. The school's good track record at raising standards and its success at including all learners and dismantling their barriers to learning means there is a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the impact of middle managers on the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - developing their skills at observing lessons
 - sharing points for improvement with teachers
 - measuring the impact of improvements on the quality of learning
- Make the provision for higher attaining pupils more consistent across the school by identifying and sharing good practice.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

2

Throughout the school pupils really enjoy learning, and despite some variation in some aspects of mathematics, they make good progress overall. An over reliance on worksheets in mathematics at Key Stage 1 means that some higher attaining pupils do not always get enough time to apply their number skills to problem solving tasks, so their progress slows. The school is taking action to address this weakness by increasing the opportunities for problem solving and independent work and there are signs that the progress made by this group of pupils is more consistent this year. Older pupils have more opportunities to explore their own ideas and use their initiative. This is particularly well developed in Years 5 and 6. Higher attaining pupils find this work enjoyable and challenging. Those pupils who find learning difficult and the small number who are learning English are fully included in all learning activities. They are well supported and make good progress against their starting points because they understand each step towards their learning targets.

Pupils are polite and courteous towards each other and towards other adults. They behave well and willingly take responsibility for duties that support the smooth running of the school as prefects and peer mentors, as well as actively participating in the school council. In the wider community, they work hard to raise money for charitable causes. Special topics and events provide good opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures and customs, and this contributes well towards their growing understanding of what it means to be British in an increasingly diverse society. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers, concentrate well and involve themselves fully in lessons. The rate of attendance is good. This is further evidence that pupils are happy and enjoy being at school. They show great pride in the accomplishment of tasks, and willingly take advantage of opportunities to work collaboratively and cooperatively. Pupils are fully aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles and many participate in the good range of sports and activities provided after school. They feel safe and say that any bullying or misbehaviour is dealt with quickly by the adults. The standards reached in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) equip them well for later life and learning.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

The quality of the school's work

The quality of teaching was satisfactory overall at the last inspection. It has now improved and is good. This is because teachers have successfully addressed a weakness in the way they plan and monitor pupils' work. They are successfully using the good assessment arrangements to identify, track and support pupils' learning needs, and to set group and individual targets. As a result, pupils know what they need to do to improve and make good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with limited skills in English are able to play a full part in lessons because teaching assistants provide good quality support. However, there are inconsistencies. On occasions, teachers fail to exploit fully the pupils' abilities at

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

working independently or their skills at exploring ideas for themselves. This slows the rate of progress, particularly for those pupils who work quickly.

Target setting is used well to help pupils understand exactly what they need to do to improve their work in English and mathematics. Pupils say this helps them focus on their work and spurs them onto even greater achievements. The marking of pupils' work is of good quality and gives pupils a clear idea of what have achieved and they need to do to improve. Good quality provision for those considered vulnerable enables these pupils to play a full and active part in school life.

The good curriculum is enriched with a wide range of additional activities which pupils thoroughly enjoy. The curriculum meets pupils' academic and personal needs well and includes support programmes to boost the progress of pupils who need extra help. Throughout the school, there is a strong focus on linking pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. For example, older pupils use computers well to produce an excellent school newspaper. This includes news, reviews, sports features and a parents' page. They also develop a strong sense of social responsibility through their work in personal, social and health education and circle time. However, opportunities for younger pupils to use their mathematics skills in a range of different contexts could be better.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, managers and governors work as an effective team. Standards and achievement are rising because the school is setting challenging targets based on accurate self evaluation and achieving them. Middle managers are good at monitoring the quality of teachers' lesson plans and pupils' work which enhances the school's knowledge of its own effectiveness. These activities account for the improvements, since the last inspection, in the consistency of teachers' marking and planning. Some middle managers, recently in post, are not yet as effective at influencing the quality of learning across the school to ensure consistently good or better progress in all classes. This is because they do not yet have sufficient experience of judging the quality of lessons.

Resources are used well to capture pupils' imagination and motivate them to do well. For example, teachers are good at promoting equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination through raising the pupils' expectations of what they can achieve and providing interesting and challenging activities for them. Those pupils with learning difficulties are doing well and are included in all lessons, with special sessions organised for them to focus on key areas of learning where they need most help.

Assessment is used well to track the progress of all pupils, and teachers at all levels are using this well to monitor the performance of different groups.

Governors have a good knowledge and understanding of the issues facing the school. They provide good support and challenge. They are increasingly involved in the strategic management of the school through the school development plan. Priorities are manageable and well directed where they are needed most. This is because the school has clear and agreed criteria for measuring success.

The school provides a safe, secure environment in which pupils feel happy and well cared for. Pastoral care is good and the school works well with parents and outside agencies to ensure pupils' well-being. Child protection procedures are thorough and risk assessments are of a good quality. Parents fully appreciate the good level of care their children receive. Staff and governors are increasingly developing links beyond the local area, which are helping to build a cohesive community that respects all faiths and customs represented in wider society. The school has, for example, identified vulnerable pupils and families and is supporting them as part of the school's programme for supporting families. Another pupil, recently arrived from overseas, has written an article in the school newspaper explaining the similarities and differences between Britain and his home country. This has a positive impact on the children's schoolwork and the well-being of families.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. All children are warmly welcomed and equally valued. There is a clear recognition of the uniqueness of each child and strong commitment to ensuring that all needs are met. Good levels of supervision ensure that children have equal access to the learning provided for them. Adults provide clear direction and are good at evaluating what needs to be improved.

Children start school with below average skills, especially in communication, language and literacy and number skills. They make good progress overall because teaching and learning are of good quality. Children genuinely enjoy learning and

discovering through play, because adults encourage them to make their own independent choices.

Clear, well established routines help ensure that children feel secure and learn safely. Healthy lifestyles are encouraged, fruit and vegetable snacks and drinks are available. Children contribute well to the environment for learning through their good behaviour, enthusiasm, cheerfulness and readiness to make friends.

The good curriculum ensures there are many opportunities for children to play and learn individually as well as in groups of various sizes. There is a good range of structured opportunities for children to develop their knowledge and skills both indoors and out. Adults ensure a good balance between activities chosen by the children and those planned for them by the teachers. They use well framed questions to build on children's responses to develop and increase their language and communication skills. Role play and practical activities are used well to develop children's speaking and listening skills, extend their vocabulary and stimulate early writing activities. The emphasis on linking sounds to letters and naming and sounding the letters of the alphabet enables children to make good progress in communication, language and literacy.

Assessment information is used well to plan the next steps in learning. The adults keep detailed notes of pupils' children's activities which they share with each other. This information is then be used to adapt further the activities to make them even more demanding.

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of the 52 questionnaires returned were positive, reflecting the parents' view that this is a caring and supportive school. Parents are pleased with the progress their children are making in their studies, and many expressed very positive comments about the quality of the help their children were receiving. The small number of concerns raised were usually written in a constructive tone and in some cases parents also stated that they were satisfied that the school will deal with any issues they raise. A few commented that they would like even more information, especially about their children's progress. The inspector noted these and discussed them with senior staff. The school has an open door policy for parents to contact the teachers or headteacher at any time.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



24 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Gosport PO12 3NB

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed meeting you very much. We judged that you go to a good school. This will not surprise you, as many of you think the same. Here is a list of some of the things we most liked.

- You enjoy your learning, are hard working and make good progress in all your subjects.
- You behave well and are friendly towards each other.
- You are taught well, and you are given the right sort of help to improve your work.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are well looked after and are helping you to improve your work.
- The school council represents your views well and you all help the school to run smoothly.

Your headteacher and the other leaders know what needs to be done to improve the school, and have already started to do this. You can all help by continuing to work hard and by listening to your teachers' advice. There are two things to do next:

- Your teachers need to give those of you who learn quickly even more opportunities to use your own initiative during lessons and to work independently. You said that you enjoy working this way and that it helps you succeed.
- We would also like those teachers in charge of subjects to find out more about the different ways they could check how well you are learning during lessons. This will help them to make your work even better than it is.

I was pleased to meet a group of older pupils who explained to me how much your school is improving. They were delighted that lessons were now much more interesting and challenging and felt they were making much better progress.

Yours faithfully

John Earish
Lead Inspector

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