

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 103993          |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Sandwell        |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 336215          |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 24–25 May 2010  |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Declan McCauley |

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>                 | 3–11                                       |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                                      |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 241  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                         |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Paul Piddock                               |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Kathryn Hill                               |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 17 January 2007                            |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Manor House Road<br>Wednesbury<br>WS10 9PN |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 0121 5053595                               |
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 21 lessons, observed nine teachers teaching and held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff, and groups of pupils and parents and carers. They observed the work of the school closely and looked at the school's documentation relating to safeguarding, development plans, reports on its work, governing body minutes and records of pupils' progress. They considered the responses in questionnaires from pupils, staff and 71 parents and carers.

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

- why attainment is lower at the end of Key Stage 1 than at Key Stage 2
- the quality of teaching and its impact on progress made by more able pupils in writing in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics across both key stages
- the impact of the investment in information and communication technology (ICT) on pupils' progress and attainment
- how well assessment is used to support pupils in their learning.

## Information about the school

The school is an average sized primary school. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly above the national average. A few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and this is increasing. There are a few pupils attending school whose first language is not English. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. Many classes have been relocated in other rooms due to a major ongoing building project which, when complete, will provide a purpose-built Early Years Foundation Stage suite and many more facilities.

The school has gained a number of awards including Activemark, Healthy Schools status and the Financial Management Standard. In September 2008, a new headteacher took up post.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

This is a satisfactory school where every pupil is valued as an individual and given the opportunity to learn in a very caring, welcoming and happy environment. Under the focused leadership of the new headteacher, the school has improved rapidly since the previous inspection.

Pupils are provided with many opportunities to learn in a supportive environment. A very large majority of parents and carers are pleased with their children's positive experiences of school. School leaders have put in place many initiatives which are improving the progress made by pupils. However, there are still some inconsistencies in teachers' use of assessment and in the quality of teaching throughout school. As a result, pupils' progress is slower in some year groups than others because teachers do not challenge all pupils sufficiently in their learning. Very recent data from monitoring undertaken by the school shows that some groups of pupils make good progress but this is variable across the school. Boys do not make as much progress as girls in writing and girls do not make as much progress as boys in mathematics. Weaknesses in teaching in Key Stage 1 have been tackled by school leaders but there remains a legacy of underachievement. School leaders recognise the importance of ensuring all teaching is of the consistently high quality evident in some classes within Key Stage 2 and are tackling this decisively. The use of ICT is beginning to have a positive impact on bringing about improvement.

When starting school, children's skills are below the level expected for their age. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science because of the rapid progress made in older classes. Given their starting points, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are satisfactorily supported in their learning by teaching assistants. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy having the opportunity to learn in a safe environment. Attendance is low. The deputy headteacher has worked closely with the education welfare service to increase school attendance. Parents and carers are encouraged by the school not to request authorisation of absence whenever possible because of the negative impact this has on the education of their children. Many initiatives have so far failed to raise attendance to the levels desired by the school. The trend of improvement which is apparent is due to the initiatives which have been put in place. School leaders recognise they must now do more to further accelerate progress, thus enabling all pupils to make more consistent progress in each year group. The school's self-evaluation procedures provide senior leaders with a very accurate picture of where improvements are needed. Given the improvements which have already taken place and the clearly focused drive to raise attainment and increase

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progress, school leaders at all levels demonstrate a good capacity to make sustained improvement in the future.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment in writing and mathematics, particularly by the end of Key Stage 1, by:
  - creating opportunities, especially for boys, to practise, edit and improve their writing more extensively and independently
  - providing more effective support, especially for girls, when pupils undertake problem-solving tasks in mathematics.
- Improve the consistency and effectiveness of teaching by:
  - sharing existing good practice between staff so that all teaching is good or better
  - ensuring that teachers assess the progress of pupils more robustly
  - precisely matching work to meet the needs of all pupils in particular providing greater challenge for those of higher ability
  - creating opportunities for pupils to check and reflect on their performance.
- Improve attendance to at least the national average by reducing the rate of authorised absence.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Pupils are very positive about education and enjoy being involved in all aspects of school life. They particularly enjoy exciting interactive lessons that help them to learn. A trend of improvement, leading to more rapid progress, is apparent at the upper end of Key Stage 2. In 2009, this improvement resulted in pupils leaving Year 6 having reached the expected levels for their age in English, mathematics and science. In English, the percentage of pupils reaching higher levels exceeded the national average. Data for this academic year show that rapid progress continues to be made at the end of Key Stage 2; however, given the complex learning needs of the current cohort and previous disruption to their education, pupils' attainment has not matched national averages. In the majority of the lessons observed, pupils made satisfactory progress and achieved what teachers expected of them. In some lessons at the upper end of Key Stage 2, teachers adapted their lessons in light of the progress made in learning by pupils to provide them with a higher level of challenge.

Pupils are very caring and supportive of others; they are well behaved at all times. The school is successful in encouraging pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. Many pupils spoke about selecting food which was healthy, explaining that they had learned much in this

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area from lessons at school. A broad range of activities are run after school and the take-up by pupils is high. The pupils say they feel safe and well cared for at school. They know that they can talk to adults if they have any concerns and that these will be resolved quickly. The school council meets on a regular basis and makes a significant contribution to the life of the school. For example, members of the school council were involved in the interview and appointment of the headteacher. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities and participate enthusiastically in fundraising activities which benefit those less fortunate than themselves. A large sum of money was raised earlier this year by pupils through an event to support those made homeless in the Haitian earthquake. Pupils of all ages, faiths and backgrounds appreciate the welcoming and thought-provoking spiritual environment provided by school. This is an area in which the school excels. As a result of this, pupils develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills and values well.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>   | 3        |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress  | 3        |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress                      | 3        |
| <b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Pupils' behaviour</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>   | 4        |
| <b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>  | <b>2</b> |

**How effective is the provision?**

The quality of teaching varies throughout the school. In the best lessons, teachers

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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maintain a good pace of learning, provide a high level of challenge for the pupils and ensure that activities are matched well to their prior attainment. In many lessons, teachers use questioning skills well to probe pupils' understanding and tailor their teaching accordingly. In the lessons where ICT is used to very good effect it inspires pupils' enthusiasm for learning. When teaching is less effective, there is an inconsistent level of challenge which does not always allow all pupils to make as much progress as they could. Some teachers direct learning for too long during lessons and do not allow enough opportunities for independent learning. Many teachers use a range of techniques to assess how the pupils are learning and the progress they are making although this is inconsistent between year groups. Targets are set for pupils enabling them to monitor the progress they are making. Older pupils refer to their targets during lessons to remind them of what they should focus on learning. Some, but not all, teachers tailor their teaching to enable each individual pupil to undertake learning activities directed by their targets. Some marking of pupils' work identifies the next steps which pupils must take to improve their work although they are not always given opportunities to respond appropriately; for example, pupils are given insufficient time to improve their writing or to correct mistakes.

The curriculum is enhanced well by a wide range of visits, visitors and after-school clubs. The school takes opportunities to extend and tailor the curriculum to the specific needs of pupils. Younger children learn kerb craft to keep themselves safe when walking to and from school. The curriculum is in the process of being developed further to meet the needs of all pupils. Currently it does not allow pupils sufficient opportunities to become involved in independent learning. Staff know the pupils well and take good care of them. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are satisfactorily supported by tracking and monitoring so that those working with them know what they need to do next to improve. Transition arrangements between year groups work smoothly because of careful liaison between staff and the close links which exist with the local secondary schools.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The quality of teaching</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>The use of assessment to support learning  | 3        |
| <b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>   | <b>2</b> |

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The leaders are highly motivated and driven to improve the quality of education and raise standards further. They have a clear and accurate picture of the school's strengths and the areas where improvement is needed. The school improvement plan sets out

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appropriately prioritised improvement priorities. Teachers are held to account for the progress made by their pupils through regular pupil-progress meetings and the impact of this initiative is beginning to become apparent. Regular monitoring of teaching and learning is carried out robustly by senior and middle leaders and is used effectively to identify areas for improvement. Subject leaders have a very clear focus on raising attainment and improving pupils' progress.

The governing body has a detailed understanding of the workings of the school. Governors use rigorous procedures which enable them to hold the school fully to account for its work. The governing body both supports and challenges the headteacher and staff in its drive to improve the school. Governors discharge their responsibilities effectively. School leaders, in conjunction with the local authority, have introduced robust measures to ensure the safety of all pupils, including thorough checks on adults who work in the school. The school works well with a range of partners to successfully support the learning and well-being of all pupils. During the inspection, creative themed afternoons were being run in Key Stage 2 by a group from the Wednesbury Learning Community.

Relationships with parents and carers are good; this was very apparent from the responses to the parental questionnaire and parents who spoke with members of the inspection team. Many parents and carers take part in workshop sessions in school which help them to support their children's learning. The school is planning to further develop family learning initiatives through the use of a base in its new build.

The school does much to promote equal opportunities for all. Careful analysis of pupils' progress has been carried out, resulting in extra teaching to support those who were not making sufficient progress. Some groups of pupils do not make as much progress as others although the school is working to redress this. Evidence collected during the inspection shows the school is closing the gap between different groups who underperform. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. It is a cohesive community which is reaching out to groups in its immediate locality although it has not developed further national and international links.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>The leadership and management of teaching and learning   | 2        |
| <b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b> | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>   | <b>3</b> |



|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <p><b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b><br/>Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms</p> |          |
| <b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>   | <b>3</b> |

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Staff in the Nursery and Reception have worked well together to provide as many appropriate learning opportunities as possible during the period of disruption due to building works. The school works well with parents and carers to ensure that children have some experience of the learning environment and expectations before they begin in the setting. Close links are maintained with parents while children remain in the setting. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage at a level which is lower than that expected nationally for their age. They make at least satisfactory progress and many make good progress. Provision for learning and development in Reception is currently constrained by working in a classroom not specifically designed for children's learning needs. Children settle quickly into set routines and make choices within both the classroom and the outdoor learning environment. The lack of free flow between the classroom and outside has been caused directly by the relocation of the Nursery and Reception classes. Children feel safe in their learning environment. Play is an important focus for learning and the children enjoy sharing resources and developing social skills. A focus is given to making healthy choices and children talk eloquently about why eating healthy food is important. Children are given healthy snacks and drinks although they are not currently given opportunities to select them. Knowledge of sounds and letters is taught daily and children are beginning to benefit from this. Staff carefully assess the progress made by children ensuring that activities are matched to the next stage in their learning. Staff plan a balance of teacher-led and child-initiated tasks, providing an appropriate balance for children. Behaviour is positive and children were seen to be developing good relationships with each other.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>                   | <b>3</b> |
| Taking into account:   |          |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage                          | 3        |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage                       | 3        |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 3        |

## Views of parents and carers

Over a third of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. A very large

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majority of these parents and carers were overwhelmingly positive about the school and its work. A small number also wrote comments to expand upon their views. Some spoke in appreciative terms about the contribution made by the school and praised the headteacher and staff for their work while also recognising the need for further development. One of the parents commented, 'Whilst overall we feel the school is good, as with everything there is room for improvement.' A number of parents still feel that unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with effectively by the school. The inspection team did not find this to be the case during the inspection.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 71 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 241 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements  | Strongly Agree |    | Agree |    | Disagree |    | Strongly disagree |   |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
|   | Total          | %  | Total | %  | Total    | %  | Total             | % |
| My child enjoys school  | 33             | 46 | 38    | 54 | 0        | 0  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe  | 39             | 55 | 31    | 44 | 0        | 0  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress   | 23             | 32 | 41    | 58 | 6        | 8  | 0                 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school   | 21             | 30 | 41    | 58 | 8        | 11 | 1                 | 1 |
| The teaching is good at this school   | 24             | 34 | 41    | 58 | 4        | 6  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning  | 18             | 25 | 47    | 66 | 4        | 6  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle   | 25             | 35 | 41    | 58 | 4        | 6  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment) | 19             | 27 | 41    | 58 | 6        | 8  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs  | 20             | 28 | 45    | 63 | 3        | 4  | 1                 | 1 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour  | 22             | 31 | 37    | 52 | 8        | 11 | 1                 | 1 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns   | 20             | 28 | 44    | 62 | 4        | 6  | 1                 | 1 |
| The school is led and managed effectively   | 25             | 35 | 45    | 63 | 1        | 1  | 0                 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school   | 22             | 31 | 46    | 65 | 1        | 1  | 0                 | 0 |

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

| Grade   | Judgement    | Description  |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.  |
| Grade 2 | Good         | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.  |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.  |
| 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. |

### Overall effectiveness of schools

| Type of school       | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) |      |              |            |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
|                      | Outstanding   | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools      | 51  | 45   | 0            | 4          |
| Primary schools      | 6   | 41   | 42           | 10         |
| Secondary schools    | 8   | 34   | 44           | 14         |
| Sixth forms          | 10  | 37   | 50           | 3          |
| Special schools      | 32  | 38   | 25           | 5          |
| Pupil referral units | 12  | 43   | 31           | 14         |
| All schools          | 9   | 40   | 40           | 10         |

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Achievement:               | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.  |
| Attainment:                | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.   |
| 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.   |
| Learning:                  | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.   |
| Overall effectiveness:     | <p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul> |
| 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.  |

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



26 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School, Sandwell, WS10 9PN

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking with you to find out about your school. You told us a lot about the things which are important to you. Clearly, all those who work at your school put a lot of effort into looking after you and you go to a very friendly and caring school. The teachers and teaching assistants help you to improve your learning.

You go to a satisfactory school and these are the main things that we found out about it.

You behave well at all times.

You care well for each other.

You enjoy school and always want to do your best.

You learn how to stay safe when you are outside of school.

You know those who care for you and this makes you feel safe.

You know how to eat healthily and understand why that is important.

We have asked the headteacher and other school leaders to do three things to help make your school even better:

- to help you to make more progress in your learning in writing and mathematics
- to improve teaching in lessons to a very high standard
- to ensure that you all attend school regularly.

We have many nice memories about your school and hope that you continue to enjoy the rest of your time there.

Yours sincerely

Declan McCauley

Lead inspector

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