

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120232
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	339640
Inspection dates	14–15 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Ted Wheatley

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 of pupils on the school roll	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Ford
Headteacher	Annette Jones
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at self-evaluation documentation, school planning, pupil tracking information and 22 parent questionnaires.

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

- the impact of efforts to improve achievement, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and pupils who do not speak English as their first language
- how effectively the school is working to reverse the fall in standards in science
- how effectively the school promotes regular attendance and punctuality
- how rigorously those in leadership posts identify weaknesses, and the urgency with which they initiate improvements.

Information about the school

St Mary's is a small school. The majority of pupils are from Catholic families but about 15 per cent are not. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds and a significant minority come from minority ethnic backgrounds, often from families where little English is spoken. Other than English, the most commonly spoken languages are Polish, Filipino and Tamil. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average although it varies between year groups. The majority of these pupils have dyslexia or social and behavioural learning difficulties. Very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

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

3

Main findings

This satisfactory school is improving after a period of staff changes, new appointments and reorganisation of management responsibilities. Current standards are broadly average and show an upward movement in most areas. All groups of pupils now make satisfactory overall progress, although more able pupils occasionally do not progress as well as their classmates. Children get off to an excellent start in Reception, and good progress is gradually working its way up the age groups.

The great majority of pupils behave well and with respect and consideration for each other. Most have a good understanding of the values and beliefs of other cultures. Pupils understand the importance of a healthy diet and physical exercise, and feel safe. They make good contributions to the school community. For example, some older pupils are 'food detectives', checking that pupils make healthy food choices at lunchtime, and others are peer mentors who help younger pupils. Good social skills and average literacy and numeracy skills mean that they are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education and later life.

Pupils enjoy their learning. Relationships are very good and for the most part teachers manage pupils' good behaviour well. The best lessons are challenging and fast paced, and pupils have a clear grasp of how well they are doing and how to improve. Marking supports this with clear guidance on how to make further progress, and with an expectation that pupils will follow advice given. In less effective lessons, work is not consistently matched to pupils' learning needs, most notably of some more able pupils, and marking is not checked up on to make sure pupils have followed advice. Also the pace is slow, leading to too little time at the end of lessons to reinforce learning. The satisfactory curriculum features a range of activities, visits and visitors. The school is increasingly organising it into topics, linking subjects to make it more interesting and relevant to pupils. The range of out-of-school activities is good, with a high level of take-up.

Good personal care and support are provided for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those arriving at the school during the year, and those who speak little or no English. Efforts to improve attendance which is satisfactory are mostly effective. Pupils' punctuality has improved through persistent efforts to encourage families to get their children to school on time. Bullying and racist behaviour are dealt with adequately and procedures to deal with unacceptable behaviour are good, and well understood by pupils.

The headteacher provides a clear direction for improvement. Recent changes in staffing have strengthened the leadership team and new members are quickly acquiring the

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skills they need to help the pace of improvement accelerate. The school has a secure grasp of the areas it needs to address in order to raise standards further. Governance is satisfactory although governors do not review all policies regularly or ensure their effective implementation. The school works well with parents and carers and has a wide range of partnerships to support its work with different groups of pupils. Efforts to promote community cohesion are good and the school has established some useful links, for example with a local Muslim school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve progress, especially of the most able pupils, by making sure work is consistently challenging and that pupils follow the advice given in marking.
 - Improve the quality of all teaching to the standard of the best seen, by ensuring that:
 - consistently good use is made of assessment to ensure work is always matched to pupils' learning needs
 - work is always fast paced with sufficient time at the end of lessons to reinforce learning.
 - Ensure that governors establish rigorous procedures to review all policies and see that they are fully implemented.
- About 40% of schools whose effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The quality of learning observed during the inspection was outstanding in Reception and good in Key Stage 1. Standards are rising and good pupils' good progress is working its way up through Key Stage 2 as sharper use of assessment information leads to work that is more closely matched to pupils' learning needs. The school usually identifies underperformance rapidly and deals with it. For example, some boys were identified as making slower progress than others in their reading, so the school quickly ordered books to raise their level of interest. It is also actively seeking extra materials to engage the increasing numbers of pupils entering the school during the year who speak little or no English. The school has well structured plans to raise standards in Years 5 and 6 through one-to-one support. The fall in science results last year was dealt with swiftly. Nevertheless, small numbers of the most able pupils have slipped through the net, and it was clear from the lessons seen that this is usually down to a lack of challenge in the tasks provided for them. Appropriate support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures that they make progress in line with their peers.

Pupils enjoy learning and although they recognise that learning has sometimes been disrupted by the unacceptable behaviour of a small minority, they also acknowledge improvements and that the school is dealing with this well. They know that bullying happens occasionally but feel secure that incidents are dealt with. Pupils work well

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together, and their learning is enhanced by the pair-work seen in many classrooms. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They respect each other's opinions, and get on well together whatever their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. While their understanding of what constitutes healthy eating is good, 'food detectives' and inspectors noticed that the habit of eating healthily is not fully established yet. Pupils' understanding of the importance of taking on responsibilities is good, especially in school though not as well developed in the wider community, with the exception of charity work and links with the local Catholic church.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The best teaching is typified by teachers' enthusiasm, very good subject-specific expertise and a wide range of challenging activities based on accurate assessment. Pupils thoroughly enjoy these lessons; they work hard, make consistently good progress and know how well they are doing as well as what they need to do next to improve their work. However, there are lessons where the pace is slower, work is not consistently matched to pupils' needs and there is too little follow-up to ensure pupils have followed

¹ 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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advice given in marking. Sometimes the time spent at the end of lessons to reinforcing new work is not long enough and some pupils leave lessons without an accurate grasp of what they have learned.

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving as a result of a more creative approach that engages pupils in learning and accelerates their progress. There are good links with businesses that enrich learning. The provision for pupils whose first language is not English and for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory and improving as the school seeks ways to enhance these pupils' experiences. Provision for science has improved with more opportunities for independent learning, investigative work and support from the local specialist science college.

Pastoral support is strong and benefits from the extensive links the school has with the local town and authority support services. New arrivals from overseas and vulnerable pupils in particular benefit from this support. Academic guidance for pupils is good. Close links with secondary schools and the Reception class ensure smooth transfer between different stages of education. The school works closely with external support services to reduce absence.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Changes in staffing have slowed the pace of development but staffing is now stable and there is considerable support for the headteacher's drive to improve pupils' progress. Other senior staff are increasingly involved in this process, especially in evaluating teaching and learning and in planning actions to implement improvements. Issues from the previous inspection have been dealt with appropriately. The school strives to lessen the gap in achievement between different groups of pupils, with some success. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. Governors provide a sound level of challenge for the headteacher and are increasingly well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school, mainly due to information provided by the headteacher. At the time of the inspection safeguarding requirements were met. However, governors are not all as involved in reviewing day-to-day policies and ensuring they are fully implemented.

The school has effective links with parents. Regular consultations ensure parents can discuss how well their children make progress. Communications about school activities are regular, the parents' association is strong and parents support children's learning.

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Partnerships with external organisations are strong and contribute effectively to pupils settling in to the school, their well-being and academic progress. Procedures to promote community cohesion are good and improving rapidly, although the international dimension is at an early stage.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the school with low standards, and make excellent progress throughout this stage in all areas of learning. They are confident and enjoy showing visitors what they can do. They get on very well together in an environment that is calm and where adults encourage children to play and work together, and to help each other. Teaching is outstanding. Sensitive, patient staff challenge, support and praise children and make them feel secure in their learning. For example, engaging all children in helping to write a simple sentence on the interactive whiteboard helped to reinforce letter shapes and gave children the confidence to 'have a go'. The range of learning opportunities, both inside and outside is very wide and children take full advantage of them with the encouragement and support of adults. Relationships with parents and carers are excellent, helping children to settle into school life quickly and smoothly. Mothers, fathers and carers are welcomed enthusiastically. Many joined in activities during the open afternoon in the week leading up to Christmas. Leadership and management are excellent, with accurate self-evaluation and fast action to implement improvement, for example in recent work to improve boys' writing.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The small number of responses to the Ofsted questionnaire indicate that parents are happy with most aspects of the school. Inspectors agree with parents' views in general. Some parents are concerned about how well unacceptable behaviour is dealt with. Inspectors saw no unacceptable behaviour and further investigation revealed that some pupils with problem behaviour had left the school. They also found that the management of any remaining undesirable behaviour was effective. A small number did not feel that the school is led well, but the inspectors found that leadership and management are improving now that staffing turbulence has settled down and more staff are actively involved in school improvement.

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 22 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 184 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	13	59	9	41	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	73	5	23	1	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	12	55	9	41	1	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	50	10	45	0	0	1	5
The teaching is good at this school	13	59	7	32	0	0	1	5
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	45	9	41	0	0	1	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	59	9	41	0	0	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)	12	55	10	45	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	7	32	12	55	0	0	1	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	23	12	55	1	5	2	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	41	10	45	2	9	1	5
The school is led and managed effectively	7	32	12	55	2	9	1	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	50	10	45	0	0	1	5

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



16 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Loughborough, LE11 5AX

Thank you for making us so welcome, especially during the last week of term when you were involved in Christmas activities. We spoke to many of you and you gave us a good idea about how good your school is and what you think about it. We judged the school to be satisfactory, which means it does some things well but also has some areas that need to improve.

You make satisfactory progress overall. Children in Reception get off to a really good start and good progress is gradually working its way through the older year groups.

The headteacher and all other staff are working hard to make sure that recent improvements they have made continue, so that you do even better.

You enjoy school, behave well and get on very well together. You treat each other fairly and with consideration.

Some teaching is good and in these lessons you find learning fun and make fast progress, but some lessons are too slow and do not meet all your needs.

You know about the importance of having a healthy lifestyle and most of you eat healthily and take part in physical activities.

You take on a lot of responsibilities in the school and you carry them out well.

The school takes good care of you, especially those who join the school part-way through the year.

The school is a safe place, and staff work hard to make it stay that way.

In order for the school to be even better, we have asked your teachers and governors to do three things.

Improve how quickly you make progress, by making sure work is always challenging, and that you follow advice given in your marked work.

Make sure that all teaching is as good as the best by making sure that work is always suitable for your learning needs, that the pace of work is fast, leaving enough time at the end of lessons to make sure you have learned properly and that you know exactly what is expected of you.

Make sure that governors check all school policies so that they meet all of the school's

needs and that they are fully implemented.

You can help by always following advice given by teachers when they mark your work.

Yours sincerely

Ted Wheatley

Lead inspector

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