

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	126042
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	381176
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2012
Lead 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	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarina Wickens
Headteacher	Cecilia Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 November 2009
School address	Cobden Road Worthing BN11 4BD
Telephone number	0190 323 4115
Fax number	0190 321 5034
Email address	Head@st-marysrc.w-sussex.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	8–9 February 2012
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M1 2WD

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Introduction

Inspection team

Ted Wheatley

Additional inspector

Cyndi Millband

Additional inspector

Alistair McMeckan

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors saw 11 teachers teach 16 lessons or parts of lessons. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body, pupils and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors also spoke to parents and carers visiting the school during the inspection. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at achievement information, development planning and self-evaluation records. They took into account 69 returned parental questionnaires.

Information about the school

St Mary's Catholic Primary is an average-sized school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and a larger than average proportion is from other ethnic heritages. A small minority of pupils join the school during the school year, and a very small minority are at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportions of pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs are broadly average. The school meets the current floor standard, whereby the government sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school has experienced some staffing changes in recent years, but these are now mainly resolved.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Attainment is broadly average at Key Stages 1 and 2, and is improving steadily from year to year. Levels of attainment in reading are above average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils' progress is generally satisfactory, and increasingly good. However, there are occasional weaknesses in spelling, the quality of sentence writing, letter formation, breadth of vocabulary used in writing, and the quality of presentation of work. Boys do better than girls, but the gap is narrowing rapidly.
- In Reception, children make good progress in all aspects of their learning, and especially good progress in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Teaching is typically satisfactory, often good and improving. The best teaching is challenging, fast paced and meets the needs of all pupils. Occasionally, work does not meet the wide range of learning needs, too much time is spent on consolidating previous learning, and opportunities are missed to enhance key skills across subjects.
- Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and often provide guidance on how to improve progress and give tasks to extend pupils' understanding and knowledge. However, the guidance and extension tasks are not consistently followed by pupils. Pupils mostly know how well they are doing, what they need to do to improve their work and what their targets are.
- Pupils' behaviour is good, and they work hard and pay attention even when work is not demanding. Unacceptable behaviour is rare and is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils are pleased to report that they feel safe in school.
- Leaders have a very good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and their decisive actions have been instrumental in raising levels of attainment and improve teaching.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2012, raise levels of attainment further and in particular:
 - improve the accuracy of spelling
 - improve the quality of writing through strategies that encourage pupils to use a wide vocabulary in their writing and to write in complex sentences
 - establish good habits in letter formation and the presentation of work.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring:
 - work is always matched to pupils' learning needs
 - time spent on reinforcing previous work is reduced
 - opportunities are taken to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects
 - there are planned times in the week for pupils to act on the guidance teachers provide in marking to improve their work and to extend their knowledge and understanding.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Since the school was previously inspected, attainment has risen steadily from low to being broadly average at both key stages. In the most recent assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2, boys performed better than girls, and while that is still the case, the gap between them has narrowed considerably. Other groups make similarly satisfactory progress. Pupils' attainment in reading is above average in Years 2 and 6. Pupils at both key stages readily chose books which test their reading skills. They recognise sounds and work out the pronunciation of new words accurately. However, they do not consistently use this skill to help them spell accurately when writing. Pupils speak well, explaining their thinking and newly acquired understanding articulately. Past underperformance in mathematics has significantly reduced and performance is much the same as it is in English. Pupils' basic numeracy skills have improved at both key stages and they carry out mental calculations and apply mathematical processes to problem-solving activities competently. Pupils' presentation of work is occasionally careless and does not consistently abide by expected school conventions.

Pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress overall, and good progress in reading. Many pupils, especially those who have been in the school since Years 1 and 2, make good progress in all aspects of English and mathematics. For example, in a mathematics lesson using the theme of Shackleton's expedition to Antarctica, pupils applied mathematical skills they had learned to understand the dilemmas Shackleton would have had to tackle at the time. They considered how far his team had to travel from the ship to the South Pole and the logistical difficulties they faced. Pupils successfully worked out solutions to some of the mathematical problems, and also acquired a wide range of new words. Pupils who join the school later make

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satisfactory progress which accelerates after a short settling-in period. The increasing proportion of pupils at the early stages of learning English quickly gain the language skills they need to learn effectively. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress. The improving pace of pupils' progress is, from time to time, interrupted by the occasional weaknesses in writing and spelling. Pupils do not always use either the same complex sentence structures or the breadth of vocabulary in their writing that they do in their speech, and occasionally their formation of letters is careless.

Progress in the Reception classes has increased rapidly in recent years. Children acquire effective independent learning skills which help them initiate their own learning confidently in all of aspects of the early years curriculum. They now enter Year 1 with skills that exceed expectations, and which provide a good basis for learning in Key Stage 1.

Parents and carers are generally pleased with how well their children learn and inspection findings endorse satisfactory and improving achievement. A few parents and carers feel that changes in staffing have adversely affected the progress their children make. Inspectors agree that this may have been the case in the past, but staffing is currently stable and not interfering with the pace of pupils' progress.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers are pleased with how well their children are taught, although a few feel that their children's learning needs are not fully met. Inspectors agree this is sometimes the case. Typically, teaching is satisfactory and often good. Most lessons are well organised, with a wide range of interesting activities which capture pupils' attention and ensure high levels of concentration. Work is usually matched to pupils' learning needs and pupils leave lessons feeling that they have learned something of value. In a few lessons, work is not sufficiently demanding and then pupils do not make enough progress. Occasionally excessive time spent on reinforcing work done earlier limits how much new work is covered in a lesson. This was a concern expressed by some pupils inspectors spoke to. Marking usually gives detailed information about how well pupils are performing, guidance on how to improve and suggested activities to extend pupils' understanding. However, pupils do not always follow the advice or do the extension activities, and generally no time is allowed for this. The quality of support from learning assistants is good, and contributes effectively to the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs, those arriving during the school year and for those who speak English as an additional language.

Teachers' questioning is often good, and encourages pupils' confident and articulate speaking skills. There are many opportunities for pupils to discuss their work with each other and to explore how well they understand what they learn. For example, discussions in one lesson between pupils about the difficulties of travelling over ice and, in another lesson, about the shapes of buildings helped pupils develop a wide vocabulary and to express their ideas well. Teachers on occasion miss opportunities

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to promote writing and numeracy skills in different subjects.

The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to work independently and to develop good investigative skills. Relationships are a strength in lessons and help promote pupils' willingness to discuss their ideas and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The effective use of good quality resources, trips and visitors catches pupils' interest and enhances their enjoyment and wonder of what they learn.

In Reception, teaching is matched well to children's needs and based on accurate, regular assessment. Teachers and other adults usually question and prompt children rather than tell them what they should know, so the sense of discovery is well established. Good use is made of the indoor and outdoor areas and children readily engage in the wide range of purposeful learning activities provided. Literacy and numeracy skills are promoted well in all activities available.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils enjoy being at school and show a keenness to learn. A small number of parents and carers think that unacceptable behaviour disrupts learning. However, pupils report that poor behaviour is rare and dealt with quickly. School records confirm this and that the quality of behaviour over time is good. Inspectors saw only good, and sometimes excellent, behaviour. Pupils know work is sometimes not demanding enough, and say that if they finish quickly, they get on with something of their own choice quietly. Inspectors saw that too.

Pupils say they feel safe. They behave safely around the school and in practical and sports activities they know how to stay safe and are considerate towards each other. Their attendance is broadly average and improving, and the school's procedures to reduce absence are effective. Pupils report that there is a small amount of bullying but did not refer to any particular type. They say that it is stopped quickly, and that they are confident that any concerns they have will be quickly dealt with by any adult they speak to. The school has extremely good procedures to support those pupils, and their families, whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

Leadership and management

Inspectors agree with parents and carers that the school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides very clear direction for improvement and all leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Through rigorous monitoring, they have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching and, in particular, to eliminate inadequate teaching. They model good practice and teachers are committed, enthusiastic and effective in pushing forward improvements. As a result, over a four-year period, there has been a sustained and significant rise in levels of attainment. Notable features of this improvement are the good progress made in Reception and in reading in Key Stages 1 and 2, a reducing gap in attainment between English and mathematics, and a narrowing of the gap in achievement between boys and girls.

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Leaders acknowledge, however, that there are remaining inconsistencies in teaching and learning and in attainment that need to be resolved. For example, the next priorities for improvement, spelling and writing are clearly identified in the school's development plan and are a current whole-school focus. The governing body is successfully involved in working with the school to drive improvements and provides a high level of challenge and support for the headteacher. Staff are effective in ensuring all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed and to tackling any discrimination should it arise. New subject leaders are being trained to carry out their responsibilities well and all staff have recently received training in assessing pupils' performance so that they can more accurately match work to pupils' learning needs. Given the higher standards pupils now achieve and the improvements in progress and teaching over time, the school is convincingly demonstrating a strong capacity to continue improving.

Parents and carers are supportive of the school. One wrote, 'The school provides outstanding support for all pupils', and another, 'My child loves going to school every day and is happy and safe there.' Several parents and carers commented on how much the school has improved recently, the improvements in communication and how they welcomed the many activities organised for them. For example, the mathematics evening for parents was uniformly praised for helping parents understand how their children learned mathematical skills. The school has rigorous procedures to ensure safeguarding requirements are met. For example, all visitors are asked for proof of identity and pupils survey the school site with representatives of the governing body to ensure it is secure. The quality of care and support for pupils and parents is very good. The curriculum is broad and balanced and organised imaginatively because it is well managed and especially enlivens English and mathematics lessons. The curriculum enriches and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, by enthusing pupils' interest in and fascination with learning. It is also effectively promoted through personal, social and health education, and through close links with the local church.

Glossary

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.
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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

10 February 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Worthing BN11 4BD

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we inspected your school. You gave us a good idea of what your school is like. We think your school gives you a satisfactory standard of education, which means it has some good things but also some things it needs to improve. You make satisfactory progress. Some of you make good progress, and progress is improving.

The following things are particular strengths of your school.

- Some teaching is good and it is improving. In most lessons, learning is fun, and there are many trips and activities that make learning interesting.
- The staff and governing body are working effectively to improve teaching and ensure you make better progress.
- Your behaviour is good. You work hard most of the time, and if you finish work early, you get on with something quietly without disturbing other pupils.
- You say you feel safe, and although a few of you said there was occasional bullying, you also said it was dealt with quickly and that if you are worried about anything, you know who you would go to.
- Your attendance is average and improving.
- The school takes very good care of you.

In order for your school to continue to improve, we have asked your teachers to:

- make sure that you spell accurately, write using the vocabulary and complex sentences you use in your speech, form your letters accurately, and make sure you follow the school's rules about the presentation of your work
- ensure that work is challenging, less time is spent on reinforcing previous work, there are opportunities to improve writing and numeracy skills in all subjects, and there is planned time for you to follow the advice teachers give in marking and complete any extension activities they suggest.

You can help by making sure you always spell and form letters accurately, follow the school's rules on presenting your work, and telling teachers if you find work too easy.

Yours sincerely

Ted Wheatley
Lead inspector

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