

# Cottesmore St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114567
<b>Local Authority</b>	Brighton and Hove
<b>Inspection number</b>	357572
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 December 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jon Carter

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>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	437
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Aleks Szczerbiak
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rachel Holland
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 June 2008
<b>School address</b>	The Upper Drive Hove BN3 6NB
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<b>Email address</b>	head@cottesmore.brighton-hove.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 15 lessons taught by 13 teachers and held meetings with senior leaders and other school staff, as well as two groups of pupils and a representative from the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at assessment information, the school's analysis of pupils' progress, curriculum plans, minutes of governing body meetings and many other documents. Inspectors analysed 112 responses to questionnaires received from parents and carers, as well as others from 134 pupils and 21 staff.

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

- How effectively the school is addressing weaknesses in writing.
- How effectively assessment is driving improvement in the quality of teaching and learning which is enabling pupils to make better progress.
- How effectively school leaders and the governing body have established an ethos and culture of high expectation and continuous improvement throughout the school.

## Information about the school

Cottesmore St Mary's is a primary school of larger-than-average size. The vast majority of its pupils come from Catholic families. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including moderate learning difficulties and speech and language needs, is much lower than found nationally. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also well below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage and the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is lower than the average for all schools nationally. Since the previous inspection, there has been a change of both headteacher and deputy headteacher, who have been in permanent posts since May 2010 and November 2010 respectively. The school holds the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards.

**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

Cottesmore St Mary's is a satisfactory school. The pupils make satisfactory progress overall and develop an exceptionally strong sense of spirituality, excellent moral values and outstanding social skills. These qualities are keenly demonstrated in their ability to reflect on life and learning and through their concern for other people. One pupil described succinctly the positive attitudes shown by many during the inspection when he said, 'We try to make the world a better place.'

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is high, however, as pupils enter Year 3 with high attainment, this reflects satisfactory progress over time. The pupils' learning and the progress they make are satisfactory because the quality of teaching is usually satisfactory. Where the pupils have access to good quality information about how to improve their work and spend a large proportion of their lessons engaged in independent learning, they make better progress. However, these features are not regularly seen in the majority of lessons. The learning activities in most lessons do not consistently take good account of what the pupils know already because the teachers do not always make best use of assessment information when planning lessons. Consequently, the pupils are not always challenged sufficiently and this can reduce the enjoyment and engagement that the pupils show in class and limit how much they achieve.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the children make good progress overall because observation and assessment are used well to guide how the staff work with the children so that they move on quickly in their learning and development. Throughout the school, the pupils feel exceptionally safe because staff know them and care for them extremely well. Their high attendance is encouraged by a good curriculum which is interesting and engaging because it reflects the pupils' needs and interests well.

The governing body has an exceptionally thorough understanding of the school's strengths and its priorities for improvement. Since the previous inspection, it has used this information diligently when appointing the school's new headteacher and deputy headteacher and it has managed this period of significant transition extremely well. In a relatively short time, the new senior leadership team has established itself quickly and secured the overwhelming support of the staff and parents and carers through the highly effective and inclusive communication of a clear vision for school development.

The actions taken by the leadership team, based on clear and secure self-evaluation, have already had some impact upon the quality of pupils' learning. The leadership team have, for example, acted swiftly to improve how well pupils' progress is tracked and monitored based on a sound evaluation of the quality of information provided by the teaching staff. As a result, the support and training put in place has led to the staff being more confident and competent in making reliable assessments of the pupils' work. However, while actions to improve the quality of teaching are becoming effective, the support that has been

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provided to the staff has not always been systematically focused on those who need it most. The impact of the targeted work done recently by senior leaders demonstrates that the school has satisfactory but improving capacity to sustain improvement.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make more rapid progress by:
  - ensuring that more challenging learning activities move pupils on from their individual starting points by taking full account of what they know already and can do
  - increasing the proportion of lesson time that pupils spend working independently of the teacher.
- Ensure that pupils are consistently provided with information about their attainment and progress which:
  - explains the system of marking so that they understand what they are aiming to achieve
  - gives clear advice on the next steps to be taken to make better progress
  - encourages them to respond and demonstrate their understanding of the advice they have been given.
- Improve the impact of school leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by prioritising support to those members of staff in greatest need.

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

**3**

The pupils' learning and progress are satisfactory in the majority of lessons. Usually, they enjoy their learning, behave well and settle to the task quickly. Occasionally, especially in classes of younger pupils when weather conditions have made it difficult to arrange outdoor play, they can become noisy when the learning activity does not hold their interest sufficiently well. They are able to demonstrate their understanding of skills they have learned previously, such as when making circuits with bulbs and batteries in science. In some lessons, the pupils make better progress. In a Year 6 numeracy lesson, for example, they were able to use their knowledge of fractions and multiplication tables to respond to a challenging design task, demonstrating good application of basic skills.

The progress that the pupils make is showing signs of improvement. Previous underachievement in writing is being suitably addressed through a range of strategies, such as Talk for Writing, which are beginning to engage the pupils more effectively, especially boys. As a result, a very large majority are making at least satisfactory progress in this area, with an increasing number making better progress. Mathematical development is proceeding at a similar rate and progress in reading is better in almost all year groups. While pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make satisfactory progress overall, they make better progress in reading and writing in Key Stage 1 because the additional help they receive in those classes is matched more closely to their needs. The attainment of pupils needing additional support exceeds that of those with similar difficulties nationally.

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Improved monitoring of the progress that pupils make is clearly identifying those whose progress is slower than their peers. As a result of additional support and attention, the large majority of these pupils have made improved progress over the past term. The majority of pupils whose first language is not English make progress at the same rate as their peers, as do those known to be eligible for free school meals.

Usually, the pupils do their best to eat healthily and they participate enthusiastically in the broad range of sporting activities provided by the school, as shown by the school's achievement of the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. Around the school and at lunchtime, the pupils are polite, welcoming and confidently engage visitors in conversation. Older pupils take pride in being buddies to children in the Reception classes and play leaders during playtime. The clear views they hold about their education are given a voice through an active and effective school council.

*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: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
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>1</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>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

<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

**How effective is the provision?**

The pupils are looked after very well at Cottesmore St Mary's. The excellent quality care that is provided by the school's staff ensures that each child is known as an individual and that every effort is made to promote their development as a tolerant and understanding person. One parent, echoing the views of many, wrote, 'All of the staff make a wonderful contribution to enrich the experience of the children.'

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As part of the broad and well-balanced curriculum, the pupils often experience trips and visits away from the school site which enrich their classroom learning experiences. Opportunities are taken with increasing frequency to make links between subjects through the investigation of particular topics. This action is especially engaging for the pupils when they get to analyse what they already know and what they would like to learn, as seen, for example, in a Year 4 class who were learning about the Tudors. Nevertheless, this practice is not yet firmly established across all subject areas and is an aspect that school leaders have identified as an area for further development. The diverse range of music and art opportunities, such as attending a local jazz festival and workshop, have been key elements in promoting the pupils' outstanding cultural development.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have good provision made to support them, with the assistance of specialist outside agencies when this is necessary and appropriate. The parents and carers of pupils with such needs also benefit from detailed guidance written by the school and are able to observe how the school's staff work with their children so that they gain a better understanding of how to support them at home. The pupils receive excellent support and guidance when changing classes and schools. Preparation for secondary school transfer is innovative and focuses on the different organisational skills that the pupils will require in their new environment.

The teaching often makes use of good quality resources and new technology to engage the pupils. Most teachers have sound subject knowledge, although on occasion the expectations of the pupils can be somewhat limited by the teachers' personal skills. The learning to be undertaken in each lesson is shared with the pupils routinely and appropriate techniques are used to engage all pupils in whole-class learning activities and to assess their progress. The quality of dialogue that the staff have with the pupils and the comments that the teachers write on the pupils' work are providing them with satisfactory feedback about the quality of their work. However, the pupils are not consistently expected to respond to the teachers' marking to demonstrate their understanding of the feedback they have been given.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: 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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The recent reorganisation of staff responsibilities has contributed strongly to a shared vision of achieving excellent progress for all pupils. Expectations that outcomes for the pupils will improve have been quickly and securely established among the staff at all levels by the school's senior leaders, with the unwavering support of the governing body. Consequently, the teachers are increasingly enthusiastic about reviewing the success of

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current practice and developing more effective ways of ensuring that all pupils make the progress they are capable of. While much has been achieved in a short time and good quality assessment information shows that the desired improvement has started, learning and progress are currently satisfactory. The pupils' personal and life skills, however, have developed more strongly. For example, the introduction of a more creative curriculum has provided suitable opportunities for the pupils to use their usually good basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology to solve problems in real-life situations.

All groups of pupils who face difficulties with their learning are specifically tracked and monitored to ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted well and any potential discrimination is tackled swiftly. This action has ensured that rates of progress for all pupils at the school are similar. The school has a good understanding of the socio-economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds of the community it serves. This information has been used strategically to ensure that the pupils are given good opportunities through the curriculum to gain, for example, an improved knowledge of religions other than their own as well as a better understanding of the effects of poverty and homelessness in this country and abroad. The school's effectiveness in promoting community cohesion is, therefore, good.

The governing body is extremely thorough in using all available opportunities to monitor the quality of improvement across the school. Governors are regular visitors to the school and, through purposeful links with staff and classes, provide excellent support and professional levels of challenge to those with responsibilities. This challenge has enabled high levels of insight to be developed so that they can make meaningful and relevant evaluations of information that is presented to them. The rigorous approach to safeguarding has ensured that the pupils feel exceptionally safe while at school. Arrangements to ensure that the pupils' health and well-being are secure are good because well-trained staff use the school systems well to report and act upon concerns. Policies and record keeping meet current requirements and the governing body ensures that staff and visitors are appropriately vetted or supervised.



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*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: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children enter the Reception classes with levels of development that are mostly above age-related expectations, particularly in their personal, emotional and social skills. From these starting points, they make good progress so that, by the time they move into Year 1, they have achieved levels of development which are well above age-related expectations in most areas of learning. However, the children do not reach similar levels in writing and creative development. Those responsible for leading the Early Years Foundation Stage are aware of this difference and have put plans in place to address the issue. Leadership and management in the key stage as a whole are good.

The children relate well to the adults who look after them at school and to each other. They are happy, confident and keen to learn, as shown in their enthusiasm to share their writing with the inspector. There is a good balance of activities that are chosen by the children and those led by a member of staff and opportunities are taken frequently to observe the children's learning and make assessments of their progress, which are used effectively to guide plans for future learning. While access to the well-equipped outdoor learning area is not especially easy, the staff ensure that the children use the facility well to develop their imaginative play and foster their creativity through, for example, making drawings of winter foliage.

The leaders in the Early Years Foundation Stage have successfully engaged with parents and carers and responded to the suggestions they have made. This engagement has led to more successful and settled transitions from pre-school settings.

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers feel exceptionally well informed about their children's achievements at school. Workshops about how the school teaches phonetics (the sounds that letters make) and mathematics, as well as the opportunity to put forward their views at a meeting about the school's development plan, have been very well received by parents and carers.

Although the rate of response for questionnaires was lower than average, the views expressed by parents and carers were overwhelmingly positive about the school. Parents and carers were especially pleased about the support given by the school's staff and the opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum. Where they expressed concerns, it was mainly about insufficient challenge in lessons. The inspection evidence endorses this view.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cottesmore 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 112 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 437 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	71	32	29	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	80	71	32	29	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	54	48	50	45	6	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	58	52	47	42	5	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	61	54	47	42	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	62	55	43	38	3	3	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	53	47	55	49	2	2	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)	47	42	52	46	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	50	45	54	48	4	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	50	45	55	49	3	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	49	44	56	50	1	1	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	55	49	52	46	3	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	64	57	47	42	0	0	1	1

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 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are 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 and spring terms 2009/10 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 pupils' 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.**



3 December 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Cottesmore St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Hove BN3 6NB**

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave us when we inspected your school recently, even though the snow outside was very cold! We are particularly grateful to those of you who spoke to us so enthusiastically and politely about your school.

I am writing to tell you that inspectors have found that you go to a satisfactory school. We noticed, though, that your teachers look after you really well and you have a really good understanding of how to be a good citizen. We have described your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as outstanding because we do not think it could be much better ♦ well done! Your headteacher has only been in charge of your school for a short time, but she has already a good understanding of what needs to be improved. She is working with the other teachers who lead your school and the rest of the staff to make some changes, so that you can make better progress. The governing body of your school is going an excellent job in supporting them to do this quickly and we have seen that some of you, for example, are now doing much better in writing than you were last year.

To help your school improve as quickly as possible, we have asked your headteacher to concentrate on these three areas.

- Make sure the teachers give you challenging activities to do independently in lessons, so that you make progress more quickly.
- Let you know what the marks on your work mean, what you need to do to make it even better and how to go about doing it.
- Make sure the teachers get the right support from the school leaders to do this well.

You can all help by letting the teachers know that you understand the advice they will be giving you and using it well in new pieces of work.

Yours sincerely

Jon Carter

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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