

St Mary's Catholic Primary & Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121144
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	358941
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Roderick Passant

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rosemary Barker
Headteacher	Victoria Long
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three inspectors. They saw nine class teachers and 14 lessons. Not all class teachers were observed because the school has a number of part-time staff who share responsibility for teaching a class. Inspectors saw the school's work including the nursery afternoon wrap-around care provision and two assemblies. They met with members of the senior leadership team, representatives from the governing body, the school council and a group of Year 6 children. Inspectors scrutinised a number of documents including policies, information on children's progress and documents relating to the school's safeguarding arrangements. They analysed questionnaire responses from 94 children, 13 staff and 52 parents and carers. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

How effectively is the school using tracking data to identify underachievement and target support, and to check on the year-on-year progress that children make?

- What have the school's leaders done since the last inspection to improve provision and raise standards?

Information about the school

The school serves two local Catholic parishes and is broadly average in size. Just over a third of the children are from a range of minority ethnic heritages. The proportion of children with English as an additional language is well above average and a quarter of these children are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, although the number of children with statements of special educational needs is higher than normally seen. The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. In the recent past, more children than is usual have joined or left the school at other than normal times.

The school operates a lunchtime and afternoon care facility for up to 14 nursery children during the school terms. A number of privately run after-school sports activities are held on site and these were not observed. The school runs a tennis breakfast club. The school was last inspected two years ago when it was removed from special measures. The school has been in partnership with another local school with joint headship. This partnership ceased with the retirement of the headteacher and appointment of a new headteacher to this school in September 2010. The school has Healthy School status.

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

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. The school is improving. Good leadership steered the school through a period of staffing instability, helped it maintain its good features and improve attainment. The new headteacher is building on existing strengths, establishing her vision for the development of the school, and has quickly gained the confidence of parents, carers, children and staff. She has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and what it needs to do in order to improve, and has brought additional energy and momentum to the process. The school has good capacity to sustain its improvements.

A strong feature of the school is its friendly, inclusive and cohesive nature. Children are known and valued as individuals; staff are very committed to them and take genuine pleasure in their success. In turn, children have mature attitudes towards other children based on what they have in common, rather than any differences. There is strong mutual respect between adults and children. This underpins the school's warm, caring ethos, and the good support, care and guidance provided. As a result, the degree to which children say they feel safe is outstanding. Children behave well and say there is very little deliberate unkindness. They have a clear moral understanding, develop their skills of empathy, and learn to work and play together well. Children develop a satisfactory understanding of how people live in other parts of the world and of different faiths.

Attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is generally broadly average and the 2010 assessments at the end of Year 6 show attainment to be above average. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection.. Learning in many of the lessons seen was good, particularly in Key Stage 2. However, this quality is not sufficiently consistent. Consequently, good progress over time is not assured and children's academic gains are not always built upon sufficiently year-on-year. The pace of learning in some lessons, particularly with younger children, is too slow, and children are passive for too long. Phonics work is not always sufficiently lively or fun. Across the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, opportunities are missed to help children to develop their independence and demonstrate initiative. The curriculum has strengths but opportunities for children to develop their creativity and investigative skills within imaginative contexts are limited. The promotion of stories and reading lacks an imaginative approach, particularly in younger children's classes, and does not support the school's on-going focus of improving children's writing skills. The school is reviewing its curriculum to specifically enhance these aspects.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop consistently good learning in lessons, and over time, so that children make good year-on-year progress by ensuring that:

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- there are more opportunities for children to initiate activities and develop their independence in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - teacher-led sessions for younger children, including work on phonics, are fun and lively, and that children are encouraged to participate actively
 - across the school, lesson and curriculum planning provides more open-ended opportunities for children to take responsibility, make decisions and show their initiative in learning activities
 - the curriculum provides an exciting range of creative learning opportunities and contexts to interest and excite children
 - the school develops a strong story and reading culture, particularly, but not exclusively for younger children.
- Up to 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**

Children concentrate well on their tasks. They enjoy learning and want to do well, and there is usually a purposeful ethos in the classrooms. This is particularly evident in lessons where children are encouraged to use their initiative and learning activities are varied. Occasionally, children get a little restless if the activity, such as listening to the teacher while they are seated on the carpet, goes on for too long.

Children join the school with skills and aptitudes which are broadly typical for their age. They mostly leave the school with broadly average attainment, indicating that they make satisfactory progress over time. Children make particularly good progress towards the end of the key stages although it is variable in other year groups.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers because of well-targeted support and careful monitoring of their progress and changing needs. Children with English as an additional language generally make good progress in acquiring English, not only because of the formal support given, but also because children are welcoming and absorb them quickly into their friendship groups. The school has successfully increased the level of challenge for higher attaining children, identified as a key issue in the previous report. While there is some year-on-year variations in the performance of boys and girls, this is not a significant trend over a longer period. Pupils who have been at the school since Year 2 generally perform better than children who join the school later in their school career.

Children's personal development is good. Children from different backgrounds get on well with each other which helps their understanding of the diverse nature of society. Most children want to improve their health because they have responded well to the school's initiatives. They have a good understanding of the importance of nutrition and exercise. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously. It has influence and has raised considerable sums of money for new playground activities. Older children contribute to the school community through book and playground buddies, which helps to stitch together the school community. Children show compassion and concern for others, for example by

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collecting for a range of charities, and contribute to the wider community through activities such as musical performances.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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

¹ 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?

Teaching has several good features, but they are not consistent in all classes. Nevertheless, teachers generally manage their classes well in a positive, encouraging manner and praise is targeted well. Good relationships between adults and children underpin learning as the children want to do well. Planning is detailed, and improved assessment ensures that work is generally matched to children's needs. Good use is usually made of the interactive white boards to catch children's interest. In the best lessons, children are expected to work hard. They are encouraged to share their ideas with each other and to be confident enough to make suggestions. They respond very positively when set a more open-ended task that requires them to discuss possibilities with their partner. In one good, short speech and language support session led by a trained teaching assistant, work was challenging and conducted at a good pace. The two pupils made good progress as a result. However, often, a number of adults support the children in the classroom, which sometimes, reduces the opportunities for independent work and decision-making, as the adults tend to be too keen to 'help out'.

The curriculum is undergoing review to make it more vibrant and interesting. Teachers make good use of the local environment and facilities such as the Norfolk museum, where,

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for example, children participate in historical re-enactments. Music is strong in the school. The annual residential trip provides additional science experiences, and other trips, visitors and sports clubs enrich children's experiences. In the breakfast tennis club, for example, a small group of children worked with an enthusiastic adult to develop their tennis skills. The personal, social and health education programme, and the work to develop the social and emotional aspects of children's learning, make a good contribution to their personal development. The school recognises that there is further work to do in developing pupils' creativity and investigative skills.

There are good links with external agencies, such as local authority support and welfare agencies, to provide specialist support to meet individuals' needs. Pupils facing particular challenges are supported well which results in improved attitudes, performance or behaviour. Children are confident enough in the staff to ask for help when needed. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities say that they are doing well because of the support they receive. Newcomers are supported well and quickly feel at home in the school. Attendance has improved because it is monitored closely and good attendance is encouraged. The nursery care provision is planned well and takes place in a safe and secure environment in which children's welfare and educational needs are met well.

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?

Teamwork is strong; staff and governors are very committed to the school and want to bring about improvement. The headteacher is effectively delegating responsibility and fostering leadership skills so that the staff have a growing capacity to drive improvement themselves. Recent work in using specialised assessment materials and moderating assessments of children's work has ensured greater accuracy in determining where children are in their learning. This is reflected in improved lesson planning and sharper, more individualised targets for children. The school now has a sophisticated system in place to monitor individuals' and specific groups of children's progress as they move through the school. This is used effectively to discuss with staff the progress their class is making, pick up any underachievement and target additional support when needed. These strategies, along with regular lesson observations and scrutiny of children's work and marking, have, and are, leading to further improvements in children's progress.

Governance is good. The governing body is influential and provides appropriate support and challenge to hold the school to account. It recognises the school's strengths and the improvements needed. Members of the governing body know the school well and many have participated in training. The governing body has a clear view of its own strengths

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and what it needs to do in order to improve further. Safeguarding arrangements are good because staff are vigilant, systems are robust and there are good links with other agencies.

The school knows its local community and is a cohesive, inclusive community where any discrimination is quickly dealt with. Its promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The school is committed to equality for all. It now has suitable systems to identify any differences in the performance of different groups, and act to eradicate them, and to ensure that all children have equal access to the school's various activities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills are broadly in line with expectations for their age when they join the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make satisfactory progress and learn in a safe, secure setting. Children settle well to their tasks and are very well behaved, becoming restless only if asked to sit on the carpet and listen to the teacher for too long. In general, opportunities for children to make choices and develop their independence are limited. Outside, there are good opportunities for children to develop their physical skills, for example by playing with large trucks and hoops. However, there are too few outside activities to help children learn by using their initiative. Welfare requirements are met well; relationships are good and teaching assistants are deployed effectively. Some are very skilled at extending children's language skills. However, teacher-led sessions, including phonics work, are sometimes over-long, or lack pace and a sufficiently lively approach to keep children interested. The setting's leader has many ideas about how to improve the provision and the outcomes for the children, but these are still at an early stage of development. However, the school has secured a grant to develop the outside area

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further, and joint planning between Nursery and Reception classes is already bringing better cohesion to the Early Years Foundation Stage.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
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

The number of questionnaires returned by parents and carers is at the lower end of the range generally seen. However, the responses to individual questions are more positive than average. All parents and carers are happy with their children's educational experience and judged that their children enjoy school. Almost all parents and carers are positive about all aspects. Two parents' responses included a critical comment; in contrast, nine parents wrote positive comments, stressing their children's progress, the welcoming, safe friendly nature of the school, and the benefits of the new ideas of the headteacher.

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 & Nursery 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 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 220 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	65	18	35	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	58	21	40	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	23	44	27	52	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	50	21	40	3	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	27	52	24	46	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	44	28	54	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	44	28	54	1	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)	23	44	20	38	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	46	24	46	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	48	26	50	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	44	27	52	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	65	16	31	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	60	21	40	0	0	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 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



31 January 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary & Nursery School, Great Yarmouth, NR31 6QY

Thank you for making us so welcome in your school. My particular thanks go to those children who gave up some of their lunchtime to talk to us. These are our findings.

This school is providing you with a satisfactory education. You reach academic standards at the end of Year 6 which are broadly average and you make satisfactory progress. The school is helping you to develop into responsible young people. Your behaviour is good. We agree with you that the school is very friendly and welcoming, so that you feel extremely safe. You have a good understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle. Staff care about you a great deal and they keep a careful eye on your progress. They want you to do well.

Learning in lessons is often good but it is not yet consistently so in all classes. I have asked the headteacher to work with staff to ensure that you have more opportunities to develop your independence, become more actively involved in learning, make decisions and use your initiative. I have also asked her to ensure that subjects are linked together to provide you with a more exciting way of learning. Finally I asked that there should be a greater emphasis on stories and reading, particularly for younger children.

The school continues to improve and the signs are that these improvements are accelerating. You can continue to help in this by working hard and taking advantage of every opportunity the school provides.

Yours sincerely

Roderick Passant

Lead inspector

The normal convention is to use 'children' for four and five-year-olds attending the Early Years Foundation Stage and 'pupils' to describe those attending from Year 1 upwards. The school's preferred term is 'children' to describe all who attend and this has been used throughout the report although headings have not been changed.

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