

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118763
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358439
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Margaret Coussins

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Parfitt
Headteacher	Annie Keane
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2008
School address	St Richard's Road Kent CT14 9LF
Telephone number	01304 375046
Fax number	01304 375046
Email address	headteacher@st-marys-deal.kent.sch.uk

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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 12 lessons led by seven different teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities, pupils and governors. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documentation including the school's self-evaluation form, monitoring records, the school improvement plan, pupils' progress records and safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires from 66 parents and carers were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress made by different groups of pupils, to ascertain whether expectations are high enough and teaching is sufficiently challenging.
- The impact of the restructured leadership team and its work on school improvement, particularly through its monitoring of teaching and learning.
- How well the curriculum provides creative and memorable learning experiences that are relevant to pupils' needs and interests.
- The impact of the improvements to the environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

St Mary's is smaller than the average primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the proportion that have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their needs relate mainly to behavioural, emotional and social and speech, language and communication difficulties. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class. The school has gained Healthy Schools status and the Active Schools award.

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

St Mary's provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Good care, guidance and support ensure that pupils feel safe and secure, and parents and carers and staff all feel that the school is a safe and caring place to be. One member of staff summed this up when writing, 'The core values of support and care for all children, parents and staff permeate the school.' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy, as recognised by the national awards. Pupils behave well, enjoy the responsibilities they are given, and feel that their views are valued and they have a voice in the school. Attendance is broadly average, but has dipped over the last year.

The good start children make in the Early Years Foundation Stage is a strength of the school. Progress throughout the rest of the school is satisfactory and by the time they leave, attainment is average and achievement satisfactory. Leaders are aware that the school is not building enough on the good progress made in the Reception year to raise attainment and ensure that pupils reach their full potential. The school values pupils as individuals and ensures that those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their classmates. A parent of a child receiving support wrote, 'They have gone above and beyond with all the help they have not only given my child but myself as well.'

Teaching is satisfactory and is supported by a good curriculum that has become increasingly effective in providing relevant, practical activities in all subjects to make learning meaningful and enjoyable. In some lessons, however, tasks are not always well matched to either the learning intentions or the differing ability levels of the pupils, and as a consequence the pace of progress slows and learning is not always memorable. Some examples of good marking provide pupils with useful information about how to improve their work, but this is not consistent across the school.

The school engages parents and carers well. They are positive about the school and appreciate the ways in which it helps them to support their children's learning. One commented, 'I have been very impressed with the school, the quality of teaching and the way I am kept informed in relation to teaching techniques so I can support my child.' Good partnerships with local schools and organisations are well established, enrich the curriculum and contribute significantly to pupils' well-being and learning opportunities through well-targeted support.

The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Effective self-evaluation procedures provide a clear picture of where the school is working well and the areas for improvement. Recently introduced meetings between class teachers and senior leaders help all staff to be accountable for, and focus on, pupils' progress.

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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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to raise attainment in English and mathematics, ensure that the large majority of teaching is good or better by:
 - pacing lessons well and maintaining a high level of challenge so that pupils can make consistently good progress
 - matching tasks more precisely to pupils' needs and the learning objectives for lessons
 - using assessment and marking regularly and effectively in all classes to show pupils how they can improve their work.
- Develop more effective strategies to encourage pupils' regular attendance, and build on the strong relationships with parents and carers to ensure attendance improves.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils willingly take on responsibilities within the school, such as acting as school councillors, play leaders and playground buddies. They are enthusiastic and enterprising fundraisers for a variety of causes, for example through organising 'Pots for Pakistan' to raise funds for victims of floods in Pakistan. Pupils are keen to learn and display good attitudes in lessons, especially when they are able to take an active role. Year 6 pupils spoke with great enthusiasm about a mathematics lesson where they had used the playground to plot coordinates before recording their work in books. They were very proud of their work and developed a good understanding of the mathematics involved, and their learning was exciting and memorable. Learning is less effective when tasks are not well matched to pupils' abilities or the learning objective. For example, some pupils were required to spend far too long cutting out paper clocks rather than developing skills of understanding and using time, which limited their progress.

Children start school with levels of attainment that are below expectations for their age. Over the two years after the previous inspection, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in the national tests at the end of Year 6 had been below average because of some underachievement. The pupils' work in their books and lesson observations show that the school has overturned this underachievement and pupils are now making satisfactory progress. The current Year 6 are on track to meet their challenging end-of-year targets, with an increase in the number of pupils reaching the expected levels. Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and other special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers because their needs are identified at an early stage and effective support is provided. Pupils' personal skills and the level of their basic academic skills prepare them adequately for the next stage of their education.

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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	2
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?

The curriculum promotes pupils' enjoyment and makes a notable contribution to their good personal skills, including their ability to work well together. Teachers plan activities well and often link subjects together to make learning relevant and meaningful to pupils while ensuring a clear progression in the development of skills. One parent wrote, 'The exciting ways topics are taught really inspire my children.' ♦ The curriculum is enriched very well by a wide range of well-attended clubs, visitors and visits. These very effectively broaden pupils' experiences, interests and self-esteem. Year 1 pupils spoke with great enthusiasm about their trip to a farm during the inspection. One said, 'I learnt that cows play chase like we do,' and another was very keen to share how lambs get fed by 'drinking their mum's milk'.

There are examples of good teaching where expectations are high, learning moves on at a good pace and as a result, pupils make good progress. However, in some lessons pupils have to sit and listen to their teachers for too long and sometimes the work planned does not effectively match the needs of learners of differing abilities or the specific learning intentions of the lesson. As a consequence, pupils do not always make the better progress of which they are capable. As a result of improved assessment procedures, pupils who need additional help benefit from effective support in one-to-one or group work. Despite some good quality marking, however, the overall quality of teaching and marking is too variable to have a consistently good impact on pupils' learning and progress.

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Provision for pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable is good, particularly for those who find it difficult to control and moderate their emotions and behaviour. Parents and carers and pupils feel it is 'helping to make things better' and welcome a recently implemented new behaviour policy. It also helps all pupils develop a mature understanding of the challenges some pupils face as learners. Leaders and the family liaison officer have worked hard through targeted support with families to successfully improve the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent, but they have not yet been successful in raising overall attendance levels.

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?

Leaders, including the governing body, share the headteacher's drive and ambition for the school. The restructuring of the senior leadership team is enabling a smoother transition and continuity of learning across the school. They have introduced more rigorous systems for tracking pupils' progress, and this is enabling leaders to have a clear view of where extra support is needed to help pupils build more effectively on good progress made in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result, some pupils are now starting to make good progress within an overall satisfactory picture, although it is too early to fully see the impact on attainment.

The school meets the statutory requirements for safeguarding and has clear, well-established policies that are well known by staff and applied across all aspects of its work. Leaders promote equal opportunities satisfactorily and the inclusive ethos of the school ensures that pupils learn and develop without fear of discrimination. The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. It has recently been restructured and is developing more rigour in monitoring the impact of the school's work. It has been particularly successful in supporting and developing a more creative curriculum.

Parents and carers are positive about the school. Leaders have developed the school as a cohesive community in which pupils show tolerance, respect and understanding for others. There are good links with the local community and the local churches of the three parish communities. Pupils learn about other countries, cultures and faiths through the curriculum and have links with schools in Nigeria, Gambia and Texas, but the impact of this work is not evaluated and pupils' understanding of the diversity of British society beyond the school is less well developed.

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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	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

As a result of good leadership and teaching, children make good progress across the different areas of learning by the time they move into Year 1, although writing remains a notable weakness. Very positive relationships between children and adults ensure that behaviour is good and children feel safe and secure. Children thoroughly enjoy all the activities on offer. There are good opportunities for children to take responsibility for their own learning, such as registering their own name when they arrive and being monitors for various jobs in the classroom. A good balance of activities directed by adults and those where they can take their own choices means that children quickly develop independence. Children enjoy many opportunities for physical activity in the outdoor area, which has undergone significant improvement since the previous inspection and provides a good resource for play and learning. The environment indoors and outside is stimulating and exciting for children, and although opportunities are sometimes missed to provide a wider range of activities for developing their early writing skills, a focus on developing the approach to teaching letters and sound (phonics) has made a significant contribution to children's skills in this area. Snack times are planned carefully to provide not only good social opportunities but also meaningful learning opportunities, particularly in developing children's speaking, listening and story skills. Children are supported well and their welfare is given a high priority. Recently introduced home visits help children and their families to make a smooth transition into the Reception class. Good teamwork between Reception and Year 1 staff ensures that transition into Year 1 is positive and builds on the strengths. Assessment of progress is carried out very regularly and thoroughly to inform the next steps in learning. Milestones in children's achievements are recorded in Learning Journals and 'Love to Learn' books that are shared with parents and carers.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

Almost all of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their children enjoy school, that the school keeps children safe, and that they are happy with their children's experience at school. Positive responses to all the other statements reflect the school's good engagement with parents and carers. The main concern from a few was about how effectively the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors judged behaviour to be good and that the school deals well with inconsiderate or inappropriate behaviour, should it arise.

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 66 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 183 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	55	28	42	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	40	61	24	36	2	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	32	48	29	44	3	5	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	41	33	50	3	5	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	24	36	41	62	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	47	32	48	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	45	33	50	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)	23	35	37	56	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	47	27	41	5	8	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	27	32	48	7	11	5	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	33	34	52	4	6	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	35	53	26	39	2	3	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	65	21	32	2	3	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.



18 March 2011



Dear Pupils



Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Deal CT14 9LF



I am writing to thank you for being so friendly and polite when we visited your school. Your school is satisfactory overall. This means some things are good and some things need to be better. We agree with you and your parents and carers that St Mary's is a caring and safe place where everyone looks after you well. Well done for understanding how to stay fit and healthy. Some of you told us that you did not think behaviour was good in your school because of a few children who found it difficult to keep their behaviour in check. When we observed you in lessons, around the school and in the playground, we thought your behaviour was good and that you help each other and understand that some children find it very challenging to do the right thing. You do lots to help the school run smoothly and it was good to learn how enthusiastically you work to raise money to help good causes, especially for people in need. Your teachers think of exciting things for you to learn in your lessons. Your school works well with your parents and carers to do the best for you. The children in the Reception class get off to a good start to their school life.



We have asked everyone in your school to do the following important things.

- To make sure more of your lessons are as good as the best ones, we have asked your teachers to plan work that is just right for each of you to help you achieve the learning objective for each lesson.
- We want you to do better in English and mathematics by the time you leave school. To do this, you need to make faster progress in your learning. We think you can do this because many of you are starting to learn more quickly because teachers are expecting more of you, and we have asked them to always give you a clear idea of exactly how you can improve your work.
- You must try to come to school every day so that you do not miss out on important learning, so we have asked the school to encourage you more to do this and work with your parents and carers to make it happen.



You can all help the school to improve by always working hard and doing the very best you can.

Yours sincerely



Margaret Coussins

Lead inspector

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