

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124348
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359642
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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	91
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Byrne
Headteacher	Jayne Keegan-Hobbs
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2008
School address	Wharf Lane Brewood, Stafford ST19 9BG
Telephone number	01902 850261
Fax number	01902 851994
Email address	office@st-marys-brewood.staffs.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2011
Inspection number	359642

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They visited 13 lessons and observed five teachers. They also met with parents, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, checked arrangements and policies for safeguarding, and looked at a range of documentation including teachers' planning, the school improvement plan, assessment, monitoring and evaluation records and records for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Inspectors also analysed the responses to the questionnaires for pupils and staff, and the 41 questionnaires returned by 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 well have pupils in all age groups achieved this year, and is the improvement in attainment and achievement, evident in recent years, being sustained?
- Does the curriculum support basic skills, especially writing, well enough and does it provide equally well for all groups of pupils?
- Are leaders and managers sufficiently focused on improving teaching and learning to ensure pupils' best possible progress, despite staff changes?

Information about the school

This school is much smaller than the average primary school where all pupils, including Reception children, are taught in mixed-age classes. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, while the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has risen since the previous inspection and is now above average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average. The small numbers in each year group means that these proportions can vary from year to year. This is exemplified in Year 2, where the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. There have been several changes in staffing since the previous inspection and the present headteacher took up her post in April 2009. Adjacent to the school is the privately run Noah's Ark Nursery, which is inspected separately.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school, where pupils achieve well and attainment is above average in English and mathematics. All groups of pupils, from the least to the most able, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, make equally good progress. The upward trend seen in recent years is being sustained, and represents good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils and their parents and carers comment positively on the improvements that have taken place since that time. They attribute them to the commitment and dedication of the staff and the strong teamwork evident throughout the school. Good leadership and management, supported by the headteacher's clarity of vision, have successfully brought staff, governors, pupils, and their parents and carers together to support the school in its drive to raise standards further. The school's self evaluation is accurate, if somewhat cautious in places, and the outcomes are used well to improve teaching and learning. All of this gives the school good capacity for sustained improvement.

Children get off to a good start by making good progress in Reception. Pupils are taught well in all key stages and, at times, teaching is inspiring. This was seen as the school's 'Family Life' project was incorporated into literacy and numeracy work. Here, pupils' learning was pushed hard as they explored feelings and dealt with potentially real life situations, including managing a limited budget. Teachers readily take on board the advice they receive when their work is monitored and evaluated. Where teaching is only satisfactory, a contributory factor is that support staff do not support pupils well enough in whole class sessions, or maintain the pace of learning when they are working with different groups.

The school assesses pupils' learning carefully and it checks that the assessments are accurate. It keeps good records, and has a very clear picture of progress for individual pupils in each year group, and uses the information to plan the next steps in their learning. It does not have a similarly clear picture of achievement over time, however, because it does not systematically collate assessment information to secure this. Systems to do so are currently under discussion. The curriculum meets the needs of the pupils well. Basic skills are given due attention, although numeracy skills are not promoted as well as literacy skills in different subjects.

Pupils are proud of their school and their achievements. They behave well and readily welcome others into their midst. They commented that this happens because 'it's just the way we are' and they are following the example set by their teachers who are 'always kind and helpful'. The school's warm and welcoming ethos provides a safe and supportive learning environment for the pupils, and pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy. They enjoy school, attendance is good, and they make a good contribution to the school and wider community. All of this is the result of the good

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

care, guidance and support they receive, which ensures that they leave the school as mature, articulate youngsters, well prepared for their future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Collate the assessment information gathered each year, to give a clearer, more readily available picture of achievement over time.
 - Make better use of support staff in whole class sessions, and check that they maintain the pace of learning when working with their groups.
 - Build into topic work, opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills, as well as their literacy skills, in different subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In most years children start school at the levels expected for their age and they make good progress from that point on. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities often catch up with their learning and reach average levels of attainment by the time they leave the school. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language quickly learn to speak English and they too catch up with their peers.

Pupils write well in different styles, with a good sense of audience and purpose. Their writing engages the reader with its wide range of vocabulary, different lengths of sentence for impact and, at times, humour. This was seen in pupils' diaries, where they recounted a day in their lives in an informal, easy to read style. Pupils are at ease conversing with each other and with adults. They have good speaking and listening skills, and give due consideration to different points of view. Mathematical skills are well developed, as was evident when pupils in Years 5 and 6 used them to estimate costs and manage budgets.

Pupils report that they feel very safe and secure in school, and all parents and carers say the school keeps their children safe. Pupils accept responsibility well. School councillors are proud of their contributions to the school, for example selecting the trim trail and other play equipment. Pupils raise money for charities at home and abroad. They reported proudly that they bought paper and pencils for a school abroad so the children had equipment to help them learn. Pupils are becoming increasingly aware of different faiths, cultures and backgrounds.

Parents and carers comment positively on the benefits mixing the age groups brings in developing care and respect for others. Confident of their own place in the world, pupils reach out to others. They readily help each other in class and in the playground, and state confidently that no form of harassment is tolerated. Older pupils look after younger ones, and ensure no-one feels lonely in school. Pupils participate fully in physical exercise activities and in the good range of out-of-school sporting activities, which many attend. They look forward to the 'exercise Fridays' when their parents and carers join them in fun exercise activities. They make healthy food choices, eating fruit and selecting and eating vegetables at lunchtime.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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 searching questioning seen in most lessons deepens pupils' thinking and moves their learning on. Pupils readily share their work or try to answer questions, secure in the knowledge that they will be helped should they make a mistake. Pupils know their targets, and they can explain what they need to do to reach them. Marking helps in this because, although not entirely consistent, it usually provides guidance on how to improve. Teachers use assessment information well to plan work for the different ages and stages in their classes, and, in the best lessons, to adjust work for individual pupils as the lesson proceeds. Pupils recognise this, saying that 'we're all different, so we all have different work'. In the mixed Reception and Year 1 class, for example, Year 1 pupils wrote about an imaginary visit to an underwater world, while Reception children created an imaginary world and discussed what it might be like to live there. Occasionally, teachers keep the pupils together as a class for too long and, because they are itching to get onto the exciting tasks planned for them, they start to become restless. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively by staff and pupils to enhance learning in different subjects.

The curriculum contributes effectively to pupils' learning and to their health, safety and well-being. It is enriched by a good range of visits, visitors and opportunities for pupils to be involved in the wider community. The school is a caring community that, as parents and carers commented, 'nurtures the children and listens to them and their concerns'. The

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

school does not routinely involve pupils in risk assessments, but it is developing their awareness of health and safety through, for example, encouraging them to check, with an adult, that the gate is locked after the bell has gone at the start of the school day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's vision, ambition and drive are embedded in, and fully supported by, the whole school community. Staff have high expectations of pupils and are well motivated to improve. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, which is strongly focused on enabling pupils to do their best, have led to improvement. This is because the headteacher has empowered subject coordinators to fulfil their roles and responsibilities well, and because staff work together, readily supporting each other. Targets are challenging, tracking systems are in place and interventions to support learning when it falters are successful. All of this supports individual pupils well, and is used effectively to ensure pupils' learning is continuous as they move from class to class. However, the information is not collated into an easily accessible form to give an on-the-spot overview of achievement over time.

The governing body uses its expertise well to challenge and support the headteacher and the school. Aware of the scattered catchment area, it arranges special meetings for parents and carers to gather their views. The school engages well with parents and carers, providing them with good information about their children's targets, how well their children are doing, and how to help them learn. The school's close working partnerships with other schools and external agencies also contribute to pupils' learning and personal development. This includes joint planning of the curriculum with another school, and good links with the high schools to which pupils transfer, which eases transition for them. The school development plan has a manageable number of priorities aimed at further improvement. A child-friendly version of the plan ensures that pupils also understand what the school is doing to improve.

The school promotes equality of opportunity and community cohesion effectively. It ensures that all groups of pupils achieve equally well, and that pupils are respectful of others regardless of faith, ethnicity or culture. The school's links with a more multicultural school, and reciprocal visits between the two schools, are successfully raising pupils' awareness of cultural diversity. Multicultural days, which pupils enjoy, and the planned 'faith Fridays' where they will learn about different religions in more depth, aim to take this further. The school adopts recommended good practice with regard to safeguarding,

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

including child protection. All training is up to date, and account is taken of the views of parents and carers and pupils within the policies and procedures.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Leadership and management are good, and the children's health, safety, welfare and well-being are promoted effectively. The school has used training and support from the local authority well to ensure good provision for this age group. Those in charge have a clear and accurate understanding of areas that require further development. These include ensuring that support staff interact with more children during child-selected activities, and take a more active part in whole class sessions. This does not always happen at present.

Good induction procedures ensure children settle quickly into school routines and form good relationships with adults and with each other. Children play and learn well together or on their own. They are interested in and enthusiastic about learning, which is planned well. They thoroughly enjoyed reading stories, drawing pictures and engaging in role play as they investigated and discussed life under the sea. The well-equipped outdoor area was used effectively in this, and the work that followed demonstrated a good balance between adult-led and child-selected activities.

Children develop good early reading, writing and number skills. They begin to link letters and sounds, to form letters and numbers correctly, and even to write simple sentences, with capital letters and full stops. In this, they benefit from working alongside pupils in Year 1. Staff keep good records of children's progress, supporting them with annotated photographs and samples of work, and collating all of this into the children's Foundation Stage Profiles. When children leave Reception, they are well prepared for their work in Year 1.

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

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2
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

The number of responses to the questionnaire for parents and carers was above average. Of those who responded, most are pleased with what the school does for their children. Comments such as 'very happy with the school', 'all staff are very dedicated', and the school 'increases confidence and independence', are typical of those received. Parents and carers to whom inspectors spoke during the inspection strongly echoed these views, and the inspection team endorses them. Inspectors found no evidence to support the small proportion of negative responses or comments received by a few parents and carers on the questionnaires.

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 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 91 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	73	10	24	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	73	11	27	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	19	46	19	46	3	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	51	12	29	8	20	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	21	51	18	44	0	0	0	5
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	59	11	27	6	15	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	56	17	41	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)	24	59	12	29	0	0	2	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	59	11	27	5	12	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	61	10	24	5	12	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	49	16	39	3	7	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	29	71	11	27	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	71	10	24	2	5	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Brewood ST19 9BG

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. It was a delight to talk to so many of you and to find out how proud you are of the school. As you know, we came to look at how well you are doing and how well the school looks after you. We found that the staff care for you, and guide and support you well. You clearly recognise this because you told us that the staff were kind and helpful, and you could turn to any one of them should you have any concerns. All of this benefits your learning, and results in a good understanding of how to keep yourselves safe, fit and healthy. We noted your good behaviour, and how willing you are to care for and support each other, and this helps you to improve further. Your school is a good school, where you make good progress and reach above average standards. We have asked school leaders to do the following, so your school can become even better.

Keep together the information about the progress you make each year, to build a clearer picture of how well you achieve over time.

Make sure teaching assistants are properly involved in whole class sessions, and check that they keep up the pace of learning within their groups.

Build into your topic work opportunities for you to use your numeracy skills, as well as your literacy skills, in different subjects.

You can help in all of this by continuing with those good attitudes that have brought you this far, by listening carefully to your teachers and by keeping up with the hard work we saw you doing during our visit. We hope you will continue to enjoy learning in the future as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.