

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109261
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bath and North East Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	363744
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 May 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christine Huard

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>	210
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gerard Costello
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anthony Brennan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 July 2008
<b>School address</b>	Penn Hill Road Bath BA1 4EH
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed nine lessons or parts of lessons. Eight teachers were observed teaching. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body and pupils. Parents and carers were spoken to as they accompanied their children to school in the morning. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at some of the documentation. This included the school development plan, monitoring, tracking and assessment information as well as planning and the governing body minutes. The school's procedures for ensuring pupils' safety were closely scrutinised. In addition, 92 parents' questionnaires were analysed as well as 19 returned by staff and 116 from pupils.

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

- What the school has done to ensure that attainment in mathematics is as consistently high as it is in English.
- How the curriculum has been revised in order to excite, stimulate and challenge pupils, and the impact this is having on their learning.
- The quality of provision and progress made by children in the Reception class in areas other than communication, language and literacy.
- How well the school promotes community cohesion and the extent of the pupils' awareness of cultural diversity in the United Kingdom.

## Information about the school

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is broadly average in size when compared to other schools. It serves the parish of St Mary's in Bath and draws its pupils from a wide area. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most needs are related to moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has more pupils who are at an early stage of learning English than most schools. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are catered for in the Reception class. The school has a number of awards including International School, , Healthy Schools and Activemark Gold.

**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?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

St Mary's is an outstanding school and provides its pupils with an excellent, very well-rounded education. The school's Christian ethos underpins all aspects of the school's life and is reflected in the unswerving dedication and commitment of the headteacher and the whole staff to the academic and personal needs of all pupils.

Teaching is of high quality and motivates the pupils extremely well because teachers seek to actively involve them in their own learning through challenging questions and interesting tasks. Pupils bubble with enthusiasm when explaining how much they enjoy school 'because teachers always try to make learning fun for us'. The curriculum is vibrant and exciting and is further enriched through themed days or weeks such as 'The Great Getaway' or 'Rainforest Week'. Pupils behave extremely well, and they willingly take on responsibilities and make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community. They care for each other in a practical and sympathetic manner. Pupils are proud that they are expected to take responsibility for their own actions and resolve, as far as possible, any conflicts that might occur.

Pupils' progress is tracked and monitored from the day they enter the school and any possible concerns identified quickly so that they can be addressed before they become problems. The school is very aware of the importance of pupils' personal and emotional well-being as an important factor in their learning. The care, support and guidance that pupils receive is outstanding and, as a result, pupils pursue their education in a safe and secure environment which ensures they are challenged to reach their full potential in all that they do.

Children in the Reception class get an excellent start to their education. The wide range of exciting activities provided in the stimulating environment mean that they learn extremely effectively and make excellent progress. In Years 1 to 6, pupils continue to make outstanding progress. Attainment is high and has been so for the last five years, except in 2010, when there was a slight dip in mathematics. The school carefully reviewed its mathematics strategies. It took well-considered actions, such as introducing a commercial scheme to reinforce learning at an early stage, and teaching older pupils in sets in order to ensure appropriate challenge and support was provided. As a result, attainment has risen to the previously high level throughout the school.

Parents and carers are extremely supportive of the school and many explained how pleased they are with the education their children are receiving. 'St Mary's is an exceptional school where our child has blossomed' is typical of the many comments received. However, a few parents and carers showed concern that the school did not respond sufficiently positively to their concerns and provided too little information about how much progress their children were making.

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Staff and the governing body know how well the school is doing. The school has set highly challenging targets for future development but they are realistic. The self-evaluation is accurate, although occasionally a little cautious. This is because governors and staff always feel they can further improve. There is an outstanding capacity for further sustained improvement. This is illustrated by many factors. For example, since the last inspection, attainment in Key Stage 1 has considerably improved, the school has sustained high standards at the end of Year 6, and school leaders were successful in immediately reversing the dip seen in mathematics through timely and appropriate action.

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

- Ensure parents and carers receive sufficient information about the progress their children are making, by providing reports at the end of the year showing how much progress they have made since mid-year predictions and targets.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Pupils' excellent behaviour and sheer enthusiasm for school are in response to the outstanding teaching they receive which enables them to achieve high standards. Teachers ensure lessons are interesting and, as a result, pupils work hard and really enjoy what they are doing. In a mathematics lesson, pupils in Year 5 thoroughly enjoyed tackling the 'Amazon Honeycake' problem, a challenging task involving square numbers. This practical problem-solving approach ensures that pupils are able to apply the basic skills they have learned and reinforce them in practical investigative tasks. Pupils make excellent progress because teachers ensure lessons build on previous learning. Pupils in Year 4 investigated transformation and symmetry after learning about repeated patterns. They made outstanding progress and became confident in recognising and creating reflective shapes as well as transforming them.

All pupils achieve exceptionally well because they receive the support or challenge that they need. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school also ensures that higher-attaining pupils and those with particular gifts and talents are challenged extremely well, not only in class but also through a range of contacts with outside agencies and providers. The very few learning English as an additional language receive excellent support. There is no discernible difference in the progress made by boys and girls.

Pupils are lively and energetic and thrive in the nurturing atmosphere of the school. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and keep safe, fully justifying their Healthy Schools and Activemark Gold awards. They are thoughtful and reflective, assertive and confident. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils understand that they are growing up in a culturally diverse society and have an excellent knowledge of a range of different cultures and beliefs through their links with many schools in different countries. This is reflected in their International School Award. They are proud of their efforts to fundraise to send books to a school in Namibia. Pupils' excellent literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, as well as their outstanding personal qualities, ensure they are getting an excellent grounding for the future. Attendance is good, although some pupils have long absences due to extended visits to their homelands.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	1
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<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?

Since the last inspection, a thematic approach to learning has been introduced. As a result, teachers make certain they make meaningful links across a wide range of subjects in order to make pupils' learning more relevant to them. This has had an excellent impact on progress because teachers ensure that pupils have the opportunities to apply the skills and knowledge they are learning. Teachers clearly explain what pupils are going to learn in lessons and use resources, such as interactive whiteboards, skilfully. They are skilled at planning a wide range of tasks. These are carefully devised to meet the learning needs of all pupils so that all are appropriately challenged or supported. Pupils have lots of opportunities to discuss and compare their thinking with partners. Marking and feedback are excellent and target setting is highly individualised so that each pupil knows exactly what they have to do to improve.

The curriculum is very well planned and combines pupils' learning experiences exceptionally well. The use of information and communication technology, for example, is fully integrated into all topics. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to extend their learning using the internet and are well schooled in the importance of internet safety. Themed weeks provide opportunities for a wide range of visits and visitors such as story tellers and theatre groups. There are particular strengths in opportunities provided for

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music and sport. A wide range of clubs and out-of-school activities further provide excellent opportunities for pupils to enhance their learning.

It is firmly bound up in the ethos and culture of the school that every child's needs are individually known and catered for. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make excellent progress. The school works closely with parents and carers and a wide range of outside agencies to enable them to make the best possible provision. Transition arrangements into and out of the school are effective. Pupils receive good support for their personal development and are very well cared for.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is extremely skilled, fully committed, and drives forward the ambitious, but realistic, programme outlined in the school development plan. Leadership roles are devolved highly effectively and all middle leaders are fully involved in the monitoring of their subjects. Subject notebooks are used very well and present an excellent overview of performance in all subject areas. This excellent programme ensures that high standards are sustained. Equality of opportunity for all pupils is promoted exceptionally well. The school ensures that there are high quality opportunities for every pupil and that there is no discrimination. For example, the progress of all groups of pupils is extremely carefully monitored to ensure that boys, girls, pupils at an early stage of learning English, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those with gifts and/or talents all make the best possible progress. The school's partnership with parents and carers is excellent and provides many opportunities for them to support their children's learning through parents' evenings, workshops, regular newsletters and internet access.

Comprehensive reports on pupils' academic and personal progress are issued at mid-year. Despite this, a few say they would like more information about how much progress their children have made by the end of each year. Senior leaders promote excellent levels of community cohesion through enduring links with schools in Namibia and Suzhou as well as through pupils' involvement in the school and local community. As a result, pupils' knowledge of the differing cultures represented in the United Kingdom is excellent.

Governors have an excellent overview of the school's direction and the priorities which they help formulate. Regular visits, reports and meetings with staff mean they are able to monitor the performance of the school highly effectively. Safeguarding procedures are extremely thorough. There are very careful checks on all adults who work in the school, and health and safety checks as well as risk assessments are carried out rigorously.

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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>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children make excellent progress and reach standards above those expected by the time they join Year 1. The staggered entry to school means that they all receive the attention they need on starting. As a result, they settle quickly and happily and rapidly learn to play cooperatively with each other and take turns. Their behaviour is excellent. They listen with eager anticipation to what their learning is going to entail for each day. They celebrate children's birthdays and demonstrate their linguistic skills by singing the birthday song in Spanish as well as English. Teaching is exhilarating and stimulating and the activities provided excite the children. There is an extremely good balance between those activities led by the teacher and those that children choose for themselves. The curriculum is excellent and covers all elements of the Early Years curriculum. Information and communication technology is used extensively. While some children were using computers to solve a number of number puzzles and games, others were skilfully using programmable toys to find the quickest path between numbers. Children competently analyse and work out the reasons why things go wrong, saying, for instance, 'I forgot to clear it before I started!' There are many opportunities for children to use the outside area. An excellent canopy ensures that it can be used in all weathers. In addition, the children have many opportunities to explore more extensively in the school's conservation area and all due care is taken to ensure their safety. They gain much enjoyment from finding out about different kinds of mini-beast and enjoy a mini-beast hunt. They use their pooters with great care to ensure creatures are not damaged as they collect them for examination. The care and attention given to children's welfare is outstanding and children's individual needs are catered for extremely well. The excellent leadership and management are reflected in the way the school takes care to involve parents and carers in their children's learning from the start. Learning diaries are comprehensive and provide



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an excellent record of children's development and parents and carers are able to contribute to these through 'wow' sheets.

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Views of parents and carers

There was an above average response to the Ofsted questionnaire with 92 questionnaires returned, representing just under a half of the families attending the school. A very large majority of parents and carers are very pleased with all that the school has to offer, and this was reflected in the comments made both on the questionnaires and in person to the inspectors. All parents and carers are very confident that their children are safe and well cared for. They also express confidence in the leadership and management of the school. Most are happy with the experiences their children are receiving. A few parents and carers are concerned that the school does not take account of their suggestions or concerns and most of these related this to the lack of information about how well their children were doing by the end of the school year. Inspectors found that, although the school's communication is generally exceptionally good, there is some justification of parents' and carers' concerns in this instance and has asked the school to address this issue.

## 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 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 92 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 209 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	63	31	34	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	66	72	36	28	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	43	47	42	46	5	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	47	44	48	5	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	45	49	45	49	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	43	44	48	4	4	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	45	50	54	1	1	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)	52	57	32	35	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	52	38	41	5	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	48	42	46	4	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	38	40	43	10	11	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	51	55	36	49	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	52	40	43	2	2	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](http://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"><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.**



16 May 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Weston BA1 4EH.**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed seeing you work so hard in lessons and play so happily outside. The many of you who were kind enough to speak to us showed how proud you are of your school. You are right to be, because it is an outstanding school!

What we found out about your school:

- The children in Reception get a wonderful start to school life. They enjoyed learning about mini-beasts and searching for them in the conservation area.
- You all enjoy school and make excellent progress to reach much higher standards than those found in most schools.
- You behave extremely well, both in class and out in the playground.
- You get on exceptionally well with other pupils and always look after each other.
- You know a lot about how to stay safe and live healthy lives.
- Your headteacher is excellent at running the school and has exceptional support from all the other staff and governors. They all understand how they could make it even better.
- Your teachers are doing an outstanding job. They work hard to plan interesting lessons and always give you excellent feedback on your work.
- All staff at the school take exceptionally good care of you and keep you safe.

What we would like the school to do now:

- We would like to see the school give your parents and carers more information about how well you have done by the end of each year so that they understand how much progress you have made.

Good luck for the future. All of you can help your school to keep doing so well by continuing to enjoy your learning and by doing the best you can.

Yours sincerely

Christine Huard

Lead inspector

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