

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Buckfast

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113460
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	357356
Inspection dates	25–26 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Garvey

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	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Francis Straw
Headteacher	Annette Gardner
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Five lessons and a number of part lessons were seen by three teachers. Meetings were held with representatives from the governing body, parents, staff and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at policies, records and assessment information. In addition, 35 questionnaires, completed by parents and carers, were analysed, as well as those completed by staff and pupils.

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

- Whether any groups of pupils were not achieving as well as other groups of pupils.
- The quality of teaching and the breadth of the curriculum to see whether it is of sufficient quality to support improvements in achievement.
- Whether leaders and managers at all levels drive school improvement well

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average primary school draws its pupils from a wide catchment area. There are three classes of mixed-age pupils: a mixed Year 1/Reception class; a mixed Year 2 and Year 3 class and a mixed class consisting of Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils. It presently has no substantive headteacher and an acting headteacher has been in post during the present academic year. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs are both well above average. This includes pupils with speech, language and communication needs and pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, or who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The school has achieved a number of nationally recognised awards, including the Healthy School status and the Activemark.

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

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a good school. It is a community whose members feel valued and where pupils learn to work together in a caring and stimulating environment. It is a very friendly place and pupils said they were happy here and parents and carers agree. 'When I joined at four years old, I made lots of friends very easily' was a comment from an older pupil which was mirrored by others. Pupils were generous in their comments about the fun and interesting displays which help them to learn and brighten up their school. Although the outdoor space is small, the school has worked hard to enliven the playground areas where all pupils play very happily together.

Safeguarding procedures are good and school is a safe environment. Pupils said that although there are occasional behavioural problems, they are very aware that some of their classmates have particular behavioural needs and that teachers and adults will deal sensitively and effectively with any difficulties. As a result of this good care, pupils with behavioural needs do not slow other pupils' learning and learn well themselves. Pupils have good health awareness. They also readily take on responsibilities and the school council is an active body which is beginning to have decision-making responsibilities which are contributing to the school's vision. Spiritual education is a mainstay of the school and Christian care is evident in the pastoral well-being of the pupils. Pupils participate in a range of local activities, especially at the neighbouring abbey. The quality of the pupils' learning about other cultures and about different ways of life is satisfactory, but pupils do not yet have a good understanding of ways of life outside their local community.

By the time they leave school, pupils' attainment is broadly average. Over time, the attainment of different groups of pupils has fluctuated, but good partnership work with the local authority has resulted in this unevenness being smoothed out. Good assessment and monitoring procedures allow the school to see that from joining to leaving, all groups of pupils make good progress. Support from other adults through effective classroom support and intervention procedures, is influential in the good progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Progress is more rapid in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2 it is less rapid. Here, expectations of what different age groups within the same classes are able to achieve are not as high as they are with the younger children and this can lead to a lack of challenge.

The astute, efficient and calm leadership of the acting headteacher, combined with strong support from the senior leadership team, the governing body and leaders at all levels, has allowed the school to continue to make progress. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school's leaders are aware of areas that are strengths and areas that require further improvement. The school has made good progress in all areas for improvement that were identified in the last inspection and has good plans in place to continue to improve. Thus the school's capacity for further improvement is good.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, by July 2012, by:
 - increasing the number of outstanding lessons, in particular at Key Stage 2, through teachers having high-enough expectations and providing enough challenge for all pupils to enable them to make outstanding progress
 - improving the attendance of some pupils by working with parents and carers to ensure that all pupils are fully able to benefit from school life as often as possible.
- Over the next 12 months, promote pupils' cultural development and community cohesion more effectively by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to study different cultures and ways of life in other parts of the United Kingdom and in the global community and by extending links with other schools at home and abroad

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enter the Reception class with levels of skills that are below those typically expected for children of this age and especially in the areas of communication, language and literacy and in their social and emotional development. Progress for all groups of pupils is good overall and they achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable make good progress due to the good care they receive. Some of these pupils make particularly rapid progress, helped by both sensitive support from teachers and other adults and also due to good partnership working with a range of outside agencies. The rapid progress of pupils with behavioural difficulties means that despite the behaviour of a small group of pupils being challenging at times, behaviour overall is good.

The school is a happy place and the pupils talk of very little bullying taking place. This means that pupils feel safe, as well as being kept safe. There is a varied range of healthy after-school activities to promote physical education. In one lesson, pupils learning about healthy eating were excited and absorbed by having to plan and then make a fruit cocktail. Take-up for the healthy meals that the school provides is particularly high. As a result, health awareness is good and the school was recently awarded Healthy School status. Pupils readily take on responsibilities. Playtimes are made fun by older pupils leading energetic play activities under the careful supervision of adults. Even very young children are quick to assume responsibility by helping to clear up after working and playing in the outdoor areas. The annual carol concerts at the neighbouring abbey church are enjoyed by the school community and the pupils' participation is appreciated by others. Pupils' attendance is average and is improving. However, the school does not yet do enough to work with all groups of parents and carers to ensure good attendance for everyone. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are secure. These contribute to pupils' satisfactory workplace and other skills that contribute to their future economic well-being. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although pupils have not had enough chances to learn about and experience life in the United Kingdom and in other parts of the world. Due to the Christian ethos which infuses school life, pupils know right from wrong and have many opportunities to develop spiritually. This was seen, for example, when pupils on leaving an assembly, spontaneously and movingly joined in with

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the singing of a spiritual song when observing a presentation on using computer technology.

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	3
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	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?

In the best lessons, the quality of teaching and the curriculum provision combine to produce outstanding learning and progress. In a lesson with mixed Year 1 and Reception pupils, the variety of activities on offer, from which they could make choices to enact role play, produced excellent engagement and imaginative play. One Reception child selling flowers from a booth, could say that she would give change, if more money was given. Adults supported the pupils well as they moved between activities, to extend their learning. For example, pupils were encouraged to use the outside display number boards, so they practised their numeracy while playing with bowls and skittles. Where learning was slower, in a class with older pupils, planning did not meet the needs of the different ages in the class as well. Expectations were not as high and activities were less varied and engaging, reducing challenge and thus limiting the pupils' progress.

Curriculum provision throughout the school supports good progress. Good partnership links with local schools promote sports activities. This has helped the school to achieve the nationally recognised Activemark. The curriculum is especially strong in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1, where a series of visits have enriched the pupils' experience. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) has recently

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been improved, especially by the introduction of laptops which the pupils enjoy using and they say helps their learning.

In discussions, transition arrangements, both on joining and leaving the school, were praised by parents and carers, who said they were very effective and they are typical of the good care, support and guidance provided by the school. Typical of the comments of the majority of parents was this questionnaire comment: 'My child has settled in and is enjoying school. The staff are accessible and responsive to any difficulties we have had.' Care for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is particularly good and one parent commented, 'The school has been excellent with the care of my child who has special needs; everything they have been asked to do has been done and my child has flourished in their care.' However, attendance at the school is not yet good enough. The school is working well with outside agencies and parents and carers to improve the attendance of all pupils and, as a result, attendance is improving.

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 acting headteacher, with good support from the governing body and from other leaders at all levels, has successfully continued to drive the school forward. The governing body executes its role well. Governors have a good knowledge of the school's priorities and are able to challenge school leaders and to contribute well to the setting of the school's future direction. Rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and more opportunities to practise literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects have contributed to pupils' good progress. Leaders have had particular success in ensuring good achievement for all groups of pupils. As a result, equal opportunities are good and any discrimination is tackled effectively.

Staff and the governing body are well trained in safeguarding procedures, which are clear and precise, leading to a safe environment for the pupils. The school site is especially secure and pupils are well supervised. The school community is a close and cohesive one and it has especially productive links to local schools and to the local church community, which is very supportive of the school. The school understands its local religious, ethnic and socio-economic context well. The provision for promoting the pupils' awareness of how people from different cultures live in other parts of the United Kingdom and in the global community is not well developed. Though there are recently established links with schools in London and in Uganda, these have not yet had sufficient time to enrich the curriculum fully. As a result, the effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion is satisfactory.

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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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The youngest children enjoy being with Year 1 pupils and the feeling is mutual. One Year 1 pupil said, 'We like being with the little ones because it makes us feel bigger!' 'Year 1s help us' was one comment from a child in Reception. The work of both age groups is enhanced by a stimulating environment which is used well by the pupils in their learning. Activities are mainly child initiated and there is very good use of both the indoor and outdoor learning environments. The curriculum is especially inviting for the young children and contributes well to their progress. After a visit to a local butterfly farm, the children had produced imaginative initial accounts of what they had seen. The learning then progressed to both good paragraph construction for Year 1 and enjoyable and interesting science for all, with the children playing at being scientists, excitedly looking for mini-beasts in several habitats which had been created both inside and outside the classroom.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Underpinning all of this is good planning and teamwork. Very clear tracking by all adults helps ensure the rapid progress of children in the Reception class. This allows accurate intervention and support by skilled teaching staff and other adults to take place and means that, on leaving the Reception class, most children are working securely within the goals expected of them in all areas of learning.

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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

The number of questionnaires from parents and carers that were returned was above average. Most of those parents and carers who returned questionnaires were happy with their child's experience at the school, and wrote that their child enjoys their time there. All felt that the school keeps their child safe; almost all felt that their child enjoyed school and that the school helped their child to have a healthy lifestyle. A small minority of parents and carers felt that the school did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. During the inspection, staff were observed implementing the school's behaviour policy well and supporting children with behavioural difficulties effectively. Pupils also said that any instances of unacceptable behaviour were dealt with well by adults. There were concerns from a few parents and carers, which were communicated to inspectors during the inspection, that some children were not making as much progress as others in some classes. This concern was followed up carefully and details about pupils' progress are to be found in the report.

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 35 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 68 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	77	7	20	0	0	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	26	74	9	26	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	21	60	10	29	3	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	49	15	43	2	6	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	20	57	12	34	2	6	1	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	54	14	40	1	3	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	60	13	37	1	3	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)	18	51	13	37	2	6	2	6
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	57	11	31	2	6	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	43	11	31	6	17	2	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	46	14	40	3	9	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	14	40	16	46	2	6	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	57	11	31	3	9	1	3

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.



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27 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Buckfast TQ11 0EA

Thank you for welcoming us in such a friendly way when we visited your school recently. We both really enjoyed our visit and seeing you learning and playing so well together in your classes. I am writing to tell you what we have found out about your school.

St Mary's is a good school. Your headteacher, teachers and other staff give you interesting lessons and an exciting environment in which to learn so you make good progress. We watched you enjoying your lunches and taking part enthusiastically in after-school activities. You enjoy coming to school, but the attendance of some pupils could be higher. You told us how you were encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and how safe you felt in school. All staff work together to keep you safe and to care for you well. You behave well and you were very keen to tell us how well you thought that your teachers and other adults dealt with any unacceptable behaviour and how you understood that children have different needs and these were so well addressed in your school. You know right from wrong and you value spiritual activities such as the assemblies that we watched.

You have all helped to make your school community a very close and friendly one. You contribute well to your local community, through events like the annual carol concert at the abbey church, but you are less knowledgeable about the wider world. You are prepared to take on responsibilities and we especially enjoyed seeing some of the older pupils leading games in the playground and younger ones helping to clear up after their lessons.

To raise your attainment, we have asked your headteacher and teachers to teach more outstanding lessons, especially in Key Stage 2, to give you more challenge in your work and to improve the attendance of some of you. We have also asked the school to teach you more about different cultures and ways of life and to extend the recent links that have been established to other schools, further afield.

Finally, I would like to thank you again and to wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Garvey

Lead inspector

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