

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118759
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	367413
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anthony Byrne

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>	401
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Philip Sandey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elizabeth Leaman
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 March 2008
<b>School address</b>	Northwood Road Whitstable Kent CT5 2EY
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 25 lessons taught by 18 teachers; five observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. They held meetings with a group of pupils, with staff and with representatives of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' written work and school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation records. They considered 161 questionnaires from parents and carers, alongside those returned by staff and by a sample of pupils.

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

- The rates of pupils' progress across different year groups and key stages.
- Whether the school provides sufficiently challenging teaching for pupils of average to above average ability.
- The impact of more rigorous recent monitoring on improving pupils' progress.

## Information about the school

St Mary's is a larger-than-average primary school. The numbers on roll have increased so that two forms of entry are now established throughout the school and new buildings will replace temporary accommodation in September 2011. The proportions of pupils of minority ethnic heritage and pupils for whom English is an additional language are both broadly average; very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportions of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are below average. The school has received several national awards, including the Healthy Schools award and Activemark. There is a breakfast club and an after-school club run by a private provider on the school's premises.

**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 quality of education. Pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils progress most rapidly from when they start school to the end of Year 2. Attainment at the end of Year 6 fluctuates but is currently broadly average. Detailed tracking of pupils' progress by senior leaders shows that pupils do not consistently progress at the expected rate through Key Stage 2 as a whole. This is attributable to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, especially in using assessment information to plan tasks and direct questions to suit the different needs of individuals. There is variability in the quality of marking to inform pupils of how to improve. In the less successful lessons, besides not making the most of assessment, teachers rely too heavily on middle and higher ability pupils making their own way through unexciting worksheets. As a result, pupils become less involved in learning, though their generally good behaviour means they become passive, rather than disruptive. The school's self-evaluation pinpoints the need to improve assessment and lessons seen during the inspection showed that recommended procedures, when fully embraced, improve pupils' learning. Senior leaders observe lessons regularly and are beginning to provide accurate and useful feedback on how teaching and learning can be improved.

There is clear evidence that pupils feel secure and enjoy their lessons and other activities. Parents and carers are right to have confidence in the ways that the school keeps pupils safe, for example in the management of access to the new building site. Personal development is strong and all pupils have opportunities to take responsibility, make a thoughtful contribution to the lives of others and partake in the many extra-curricular sports, trips and cultural activities. Pupils respond with thoughtful reflection to the religious character of the school, as is evident from their contribution to displays and participation in worship. The few non-Catholic pupils are treated with equal respect by all.

The capacity of leaders and the governing body to sustain improvement is satisfactory. The issues from the previous report have been securely addressed. Pupils are now enthusiastic about science and the small outside play area for the Reception class is used well and supplemented by adventurous expeditions to the main playground. Sound and improving self-evaluation is demonstrated by the headteacher's evidence-based approach which has identified areas for improvement in addition to those raised at the previous inspection. Assessment records are kept, but not all teachers have taken full ownership by regularly referring to them to influence the planning of tasks, so the impact is inconsistent. The headteacher has put sound early steps in place to give those staff who require it the opportunity to work alongside the best exponents of assessment but the impact of this professional development is not fully evident.

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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?

- Improve rates of progress, especially in Key Stage 2, by:
  - improving teachers' use of assessment information to plan lessons which meet the needs of and challenge all pupils
  - ensuring that marking consistently informs pupils how they need to improve
  - sharing good practice more extensively, especially with regards to assessment, to secure consistently good or better teaching and learning.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Pupils come to school ready and enthusiastic to learn and this is reflected in above average levels of attendance. They particularly enjoy the strongest elements of the curriculum, such as science. They have few complaints about learning, though they do point out that sometimes they have to repeat work they already know. Pupils express a desire for more practical activity which they feel helps make learning memorable. That pupils care about getting their work right was often evident and was illustrated by a Year 3 pupil eagerly exclaiming when drawing geometrical figures, 'We'd better use a protractor or we might be a degree out!' However, pupils do not always have enough clear guidance in lessons or through marking about precisely what they should be aiming for, so they are not consistently challenged enough. Those pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities do get the support they need to fully participate in learning and so keep pace with the progress of others. Consequently, they achieve in line with their peers.

Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. They feel exceptionally safe in school, as both pupils' and parents' and carers' questionnaire responses confirm. There is very little friction between pupils as, influenced by positive school values, they show care and respect for each other. They appreciate the way the school teaches them to know how to avoid dangers outside school, without being scared about them. At the time of the inspection, pupils were looking forward to a visitor coming in to inform them about drug-related risks. An example of their outstanding awareness of safety is that a presentation by pupils about e-safety to a conference of teachers has led to it being published as a pamphlet to be used with pupils in other schools. Another outstanding feature is the very positive contribution made by pupils within and beyond the school community. They raise money for play equipment, 'to make school a better place for everybody', in the words of one school council member. They are sympathetic to the needs of the less fortunate, learning what it is like to carry the water humans need in a day, and actively contribute to charities. They engage with the wider community in town, inter-schools and parish events, giving freely of their well-developed musical skills. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of healthy lifestyles is good and reflects St Mary's Healthy Schools status. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, but in a minority of lessons their capacity for wonder or reflection is not fully stretched.

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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>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</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>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</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?

In the most effective lessons, the purpose of the learning is clearly explained, tasks are relevant and interesting and learning is reviewed and reinforced. However, assessment information to inform planning is not always fully exploited, even in some of the better lessons. For instance, prompts about questions to ask characters in a story were given out to all pupils when the more able could have devised their own. Marking is consistently regular, but some marking that only praises or confirms that the learning objective has been met does not tell pupils enough about how to improve.

The curriculum is satisfactory with some notable strengths. Science has improved since the previous inspection and religious education is central to the school's values. Music is well supported by partnerships with external specialist teachers and physical education has greatly benefited from the local school sports partnership. The school provides ample extra-curricular opportunities and takes care that everyone can get involved. There are eagerly anticipated trips, such as Year 4's day trip to France on the second day of inspection and cultural activities which engage children with the community. Several children said what a 'sporty' school St Mary's is, reflecting its Activemark status. However, not all subjects are planned with the imagination evident in the strongest so the curriculum does not consistently support rapid progress for all pupils as well as it might.

The distinctive caring and welcoming environment enables pupils to flourish. Pupils are treated like members of a large family. The school has effective links with parents and

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carers and nursery schools so that information about children's learning and development is exchanged before children enter the Reception classes, ensuring that they settle in quickly. Information to assist transition from Year 2 to Year 3 is now more carefully coordinated than in the recent past. Pupils are provided with good advice and support before transferring to secondary schools. Support for vulnerable pupils ensures barriers to their learning are reduced. The progress of all pupils is rigorously tracked. Teaching assistants and external advice are well used to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Good care, guidance and support underpin the school's mainly good or better personal development outcomes.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Management of teaching and learning is becoming increasingly rigorous. The headteacher's expertise is being utilised by another school and resources are being pooled for joint training. Monitoring and evaluation are broadly accurate, as demonstrated by correlation with inspectors' judgements in five joint observations, and the steadily improving trend in the proportion of good or better teaching and learning demonstrates growing impact. However, inconsistencies in practice indicate that not all staff have grasped fully what needs to be done to secure faster progress.

The governing body fully endorses the headteacher's realistic view of what is needed to further improve and members know it is not fully embedded. The governing body discharges its statutory responsibilities adequately and is beginning to hold the school to account more effectively. Relationships with parents and carers are strong as evidenced by questionnaires returned and comments such as, 'The headteacher is always willing to speak to parents with concerns or worries even at short notice. My children love it at St Mary's.' Plans are in place to build on this to inform parents and carers more fully about their children's progress and how they can help.

A good range of partnerships supports the curriculum and pupils' well-being. Discrimination is tackled appropriately. There were no recorded racist incidents or exclusions at the time of the inspection. While rates of pupils' progress are not consistent across the school, rigorous tracking reveals that no particular groups are falling behind and lessons are improving. Safeguarding meets all requirements and quality-assurance systems are robust. Other schools have taken a lead from some aspects of how effective safeguarding has been managed at St Mary's. The limited cultural diversity of the local area has prompted links with an inner-city school with visits and letters exchanged.

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Learning French and associated trips extend pupils' horizons so that, overall, the school's contribution to community cohesion is good

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

When children enter the Reception class their attainment is at least in line with national expectations. They make good progress and by the time they enter Year 1, attainment is above national expectations across all areas of learning. Children's behaviour is good and their social skills with adults and each other are well developed. Teachers and assistants have expert knowledge of children's development and plan a variety of purposeful activities based around themes that children enjoy and within which they can make independent choices, such as 'Pirates'. The small outside area is used well to extend learning and choice.

Although planning covers all areas of learning, there are some missed opportunities for extended role play. Children's progress is rigorously tracked so that planning takes account of the next steps. Parents and carers are encouraged to become involved in their children's learning and support it at home. The leader organises a team of enthusiastic teachers and teaching assistants, who work well together. They review what they provide and how it can be improved to make sure that all children make as much progress as they are able. The team makes good use of links with parents and carers and other organisations to enrich the curriculum.



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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

There was a higher than usual return of the Ofsted questionnaire. Parents and carers were almost unanimous in their confidence that the school keeps children safe and belief that their children enjoy school. Several parents and carers wrote praising the school highly, particularly the headteacher, for being approachable. As a result, the inspection team concluded from this and from other evidence that engagement with parents and carers is good. However, inspection findings confirm that pupils could be making more rapid progress and judged that information about how each pupil can improve is not precise enough.

## 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 161 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 401 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	111	69	48	30	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	120	75	39	24	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	79	49	68	42	10	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	82	51	69	43	3	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	104	65	51	32	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	88	55	60	37	9	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	97	60	58	36	2	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)	88	55	55	34	3	2	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	94	58	54	34	9	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	91	57	59	37	2	1	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	75	47	64	40	11	7	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	111	69	44	27	4	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	111	69	44	27	3	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.**



27 June 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Whitstable, CT5 2EY**

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school. The inspection team found you very pleasant to be with. Your families and school should be proud of you. We think St Mary's provides a satisfactory standard of education. You make good progress in the Reception classes and the most rapid progress afterwards in Years 1 and 2. After that, there are times when your progress is a little slower than is expected and you leave school having made satisfactory progress overall and your attainment in English and mathematics is similar to that of pupils in most primary schools. Your headteacher monitors how you are doing carefully and leads your teachers in developing lessons and assessment that ensure you are challenged to reach your full potential.

We know you take great care to do your work well. Teachers mark it regularly, but what works best in lessons and in marking is when they make it very clear what is expected. You need to know more about how well you have done and how to improve. The greatest strength of the school is how it makes you feel part of a big family. You grow up as thoughtful people who are very considerate of each other and care very much about people in the rest of the world. We know from your responses to the questionnaires that you think the school keeps you very safe and we agree that it does. You and your parents and carers are proud of your school. To make it even better we have asked the headteacher, staff and the governing body to do the following.

- Improve rates of progress, especially in Key Stage 2, by:
- making sure that lessons are planned to take into account your different needs and starting points, and challenge you to always do your best
- making sure that marking always shows you clearly how you can improve your work
- encouraging teachers to share their ideas for improving lessons more often.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Byrne

Lead inspector

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