

St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100446
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	354849
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Marion Wallace

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	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Nicholson
Headteacher	Martha Braithwaite (acting headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 11 teachers in 22 lessons, and held meetings with parents and carers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its improvement plan and those of the subject departments, minutes of governing body meetings, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, they carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work and analysed 83 questionnaires received from parents and carers.

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

- The impact of leadership in bringing about improvements, especially in mathematics.
- The progress of boys and more-able pupils in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1.
- The provision for and progress of more-able pupils in English in Key Stage 2.

Information about the school

St Mary's C of E is an average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and almost half are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well-above average, but very few are in the early stages of learning English. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special educational needs are above average. Their main needs are for learning and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-above average. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in a Reception class. There is a breakfast club. An acting headteacher has been in post since September 2010. An appointment of a substantive headteacher has been made and the post is to be taken up in September 2011.

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

2

Main findings

The overall effectiveness of St Mary's C of E Primary School is satisfactory. Improvements in all aspects of the school have been rapid this year. It has some good features and the acting headteacher, governing body and senior leaders are particularly successful in promoting pupils' personal development. An overwhelming majority of pupils enjoy school and have a positive attitude to their work because the school's ethos is strong and all individuals feel valued. Many parents and carers commented on the improvements in aspects of school life. One parent summarised the views of many; 'I'm really impressed with St Mary's. The acting head and her team have been very positive and helpful towards my child's education.' Pupils confirmed an equally positive view.

These are the key strengths of the school.

- Relationships are strong and the school's ethos is warm and welcoming. Consequently, pupils make good gains in their personal development.
- Safeguarding procedures are good and, consequently, pupils say they feel very safe in school. They are very aware of internet safety.
- Care, guidance and support are strong, so pupils behave sensibly and are enthusiastic learners who have a mature attitude to their work.
- Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where the outdoor area is used well to extend and enhance all areas of learning.
- Pupils make a good contribution to their school and local community. They are proud of their roles as 'St Mary's Saviours,' 'School Councillors' or 'Helping Hands' and are keen to make a contribution to their school.
- Pupils gain a good knowledge and awareness of how to stay fit and healthy and lead an active lifestyle.

Leaders have effective systems for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school. There is good organisation, a strong, shared vision leading to a continual drive for improvement. The school has succeeded in tackling issues identified in the last inspection report, including improvements in the provision for and outcomes in mathematics. This strong track record and effective leadership demonstrate its good capacity to sustain improvement.

These are the key areas for improvement.

- Attainment in English has improved this year, but it is not yet consistent enough to ensure all year groups achieve well at the higher Level 5 in Key Stage 2. Spelling is a weakness throughout the school.

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- Although provision for mathematics and the standards pupils attain in the subject have improved, good outcomes are not yet consistent across all classes.
- Teaching and learning have improved, but are not yet consistently good or better in all classes. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to use assessment information to challenge learners enough, especially the more-able pupils.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be 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?

- Accelerate progress and raise attainment in English and mathematics throughout the school, especially for more-able pupils by:
 - ensuring key skills in English and mathematics are taught consistently well
 - making higher standards consistent across all classes
 - ensuring every opportunity is given for pupils to use their writing skills across the curriculum
 - improving pupils' spelling by ensuring they practise words they find difficult regularly.
- Ensure that teaching is consistently of good or better quality by:
 - making certain that all teachers use assessment more effectively to plan lessons that match the needs of and provide appropriate challenge for all pupils, especially the more able
 - helping pupils understand how to improve their work through consistently helpful marking in all classes
 - ensuring all teachers target appropriately challenging questions for pupils of different abilities in order to extend their learning fully.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

From starting points that are below what are typical at this age in most areas of learning and even lower in communication, language and literacy and creative development children make good progress in the Reception class. They enter Year 1 slightly below average levels in communication, language and literacy and broadly in line in other areas of learning. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 and reach broadly average attainment in English and mathematics by the time they leave the school. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities which make learning and good behaviour a challenge make similar progress to that of their peers. Pupils with learning and social, emotional and behavioural needs make the same progress as their peers. Inspection evidence found no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels at both key stages is increasing, but is still not as good as it could be because occasionally teachers miss opportunities to challenge more-able pupils.

While achievement is satisfactory overall, the quality of learning in year groups and in subjects is variable. Expectations are not always sufficiently high. Some older pupils said

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'Sometimes the work needs to be harder so that we can improve our levels at secondary school.' In some classes, tasks are not matched closely enough to the needs of all, especially those of the more able. Key skills, particularly in English and mathematics, are not practised and applied consistently, limiting pupils' achievement and future economic well-being to no more than satisfactory. Incorrect spelling is often missed and, consequently, pupils' written accuracy does not improve as quickly as it could.

In contrast, learning in many lessons is good. For example, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, pupils made good progress working out number problems in taking away 2- and 3-digit numbers. The pupils were eager to complete their task so that they could try more difficult challenges. Boys made the same good progress as girls. In a Year 6 English lesson, pupils enjoyed empathising with a character in a video clip from the book, 'Matilda'. They were challenged to identify their own feelings and emotions at the prospect of transferring to their new secondary school in September and responded well.

Pupils take pride in their work. Their presentation and handwriting are neat and work is well presented. Guided reading sessions encourage pupils to make satisfactory progress in their reading and, as a result, they know how to tackle difficult words. Opportunities to explore language and understand the text are missed sometimes because adults are not rigorous enough with their questioning. The school's tracking information and inspection evidence indicate significant improvement in attainment and progress currently, particularly at Key Stage 1. Many pupils are currently progressing well enough to reach challenging targets. The very few pupils who are at early stages in learning to speak English as an additional language are able to progress in line with others because they gain a command of the language quickly and are able to access the full curriculum. Pupils from all social and ethnic backgrounds feel valued so that they progress and achieve equally well.

Pupils behave sensibly. They work cooperatively with others. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is good. Pupils talk knowledgeably about their responsibilities, such as being 'Helping Hands and 'St Mary's Saviours', and contribute well to the school and local community. They show responsibility towards others and respect for those with differing lifestyles and beliefs. However, their awareness of other parts of the United Kingdom is less well developed. They are in the process of developing a link with a school in Kenya. Older pupils reflect maturely on issues facing the world and their own dreams and aspirations. They work well with others and opportunities to discuss work with a partner are well developed throughout the school. School council members talk sensibly about their contribution to the school and how they intend to improve it.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall, but much practice observed during the inspection was good. Lessons are usually well planned and good relationships with staff contribute to a positive climate for learning. The use of assessment information is not yet consistent or rigorous enough in all classes. That undermines the effectiveness of teaching and means that the match of work to pupils' abilities is not always precise enough to ensure consistently good progress, especially for more-able pupils. Pupils appreciate well-planned opportunities to discuss their ideas with others during 'talking partner' sessions. Although teachers use questions well to check pupils' knowledge and understanding, often, they miss opportunities to target questions to different ability groups. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. The 'learning ladders' show next steps to improve and are used consistently well by most teachers to help pupils know what they have to do to reach the higher levels in their work. Analysis of pupils' work shows helpful self-evaluation, but, although the quality of marking has improved, there is still inconsistent practice in classes and subjects.

Generally, the curriculum matches pupils' needs, but is not always adapted well enough to meet those of more-able pupils, particularly in English and mathematics. There is too little opportunity for pupils to use writing skills across subjects. The curriculum's strengths lie in the personal and social education programme, which assists pupils' good personal and social development. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in Spanish, dance, physical

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education and music and they all have opportunity to attend the interesting range of extra-curricular clubs and activities.

The school works well with external agencies and support is targeted well to potentially vulnerable pupils and those who need additional help. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are helped to make their best progress in small support groups. For example, a group of Year 5 pupils were helped to describe their feelings and reactions well when supported in a small group. One pupil described a story character's feelings as 'frozen and frightened'. However, the progress of those pupils is not above satisfactory in full classes. The school works well with the local hospital, for example, to give extra support to pupils with medical needs. Good procedures are in place for checking attendance and, consequently, levels of attendance are improving. Attendance at the breakfast club introduced in September is encouraging and a helpful start to the day for those who attend. Induction and transition arrangements for children entering the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage and when moving on to secondary schools are good.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior and middle leaders communicate high expectations to staff consistently about securing improvement. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and demonstrate strong drive and ambition to improve the school. They are using the evidence from accurate self-evaluation to enhance provision and target the most important areas for improvement. Consequently, progress and attainment have improved from better teaching. For example, the school has improved provision and outcomes for mathematics in the last year. Although much teaching is good, leaders and managers have not yet ensured its quality is consistently good or better. Middle leaders support senior leaders well and monitor their areas of responsibility with increasing competence.

The governing body supports and challenges the school satisfactorily. Most members are new to their role, but they are becoming knowledgeable and skilled at challenging the school rigorously. The improvement plan identifies appropriate priorities to raise the effectiveness of the school from satisfactory to good. Close partnerships with the local authority are having a positive impact on outcomes.

The school's promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. All groups of pupils enjoy learning and achieve well in their personal development. The school analyses information available on the academic performance of individuals and groups of pupils to identify underachievement. Pupils' performance in all aspects of school life is evaluated. However, their academic achievement is not above satisfactory.

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The school adopts very good safeguarding procedures. All adults have received good-quality training in child protection and procedures are applied tightly. Extensive improvements have been made to ensure the security of the site. All parents and carers responding to the Ofsted questionnaire consider that their children are safe in school. Pupils' views on safety are considered and they are sure that they are safe in the school.

Leaders have suitably well-advanced plans for community cohesion and they evaluate their impact and effectiveness well. The school is establishing links with a school in Kenya and has good links with local schools and the church, reflected in pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and strong sense of community responsibility. However, national links are less well developed.

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	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle into the Reception class well and make good progress in all areas of learning because teaching is good. The very few children who are in the early stages of learning English and those children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well cared for and make the same good progress as their peers. Parents and carers of children attending the whole-school assembly led by Reception Year children were very positive about the provision their children receive.

Personal aspects of care and welfare are good and contribute to children's very positive start. Relationships are strong and, consequently, children make good progress in their personal development. Children learn to behave well because expectations are very clear. Learning is fun and adults challenge individual children to respond to questions and to talk about their ideas. Consequently, the children make good progress in their speaking skills. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to challenge more-able children.

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Staff provide interesting activities indoors and outdoors. Children have good opportunities to learn through activities led by adults as well as those they choose for themselves. Adults use the outdoor area well; it is a stimulating and exciting, integral part of the learning environment. Questions are used well, for example, 'Why does the frog have a long tongue?' Most children learn that the frog uses its tongue to collect and eat insects. Children make good progress in learning to link sounds to letters. They speak confidently in assembly, sharing the contents of their special books with the whole school and with their parents and carers.

Children learn to cooperate and play well together. For example, three children talked about the route their programmable 'bee bot,' toys would take and managed to programme them. They learn to be responsible for others and are eager to take Benji, the toy dog, home for the night so that they can look after him.

The provision is led and managed well. The leader is new to the role but has made a good start to developing the provision.

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

There was an above-average response to the inspection questionnaire for a primary school. The large majority of responses showed parents and carers are satisfied with the school. They regard the school as happy, welcoming and friendly. Most say their children enjoy attending and are happy with their progress. Parents and carers regard the school as caring and supportive. They identify strengths of the school as recent improvements and the way it keeps the pupils safe. Criticism was constructive and mainly concerned with the progress some more-able pupils are making and the constant changes of staff in one year group. Inspectors found that challenge for more-able pupils could be better. There have been staff changes, but these have not been excessive and pupils benefit from specialist teaching in music, dance, physical education and Spanish.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's C of E 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 83 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 176 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	64	26	31	4	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	65	26	31	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	44	53	28	37	10	12	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	51	36	43	4	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	42	51	36	43	4	5	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	47	38	46	4	5	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	51	26	31	10	12	1	1
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)	40	48	29	35	3	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	46	36	43	5	6	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	42	37	45	6	7	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	39	35	42	8	10	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	43	52	32	39	2	2	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	53	33	40	2	2	1	1

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.



26 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's C of E Primary School, London, N1 2EP

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed your singing in assembly. It was a very happy start to the day and we will remember how enthusiastically you all performed the actions and sang 'Shine'. Reception Year children also shared their 'special books' well, talking very clearly and confidently to their parents and carers and the whole school.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. Here are some of its strengths.

- You enjoy learning and behave well.
- You benefit from and enjoy the many activities, clubs, visits and visitors.
- Your school cares for you well and teaches you about how to be healthy and to respect and care for others.
- You feel very safe in school because you can talk to the adults if you have a problem.
- You are responsible and make a good contribution to your school and the wider community.
- Your school council is well organised and is working well with the whole school.
- All staff and the governing body work well together to ensure your school continues to improve.
- You have strong leaders who have high expectations of you.

There are some things that we have identified for your school to improve:

- Make sure that you all reach higher standards in English and mathematics, especially those of you who learn quickly.
- Ensure that all teachers use the information about your progress to plan work that is closely matched to your ability, so that you are all appropriately challenged to learn as well as you can.

You can help with these improvements by continuing to work really hard.

Thank you for a very enjoyable visit to your school and best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Marion Wallace

Lead Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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