

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100172
Local Authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	376360
Inspection dates	5–6 October 2011
Reporting inspector	John Anthony

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	470
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs F Gosbee
Headteacher	Miss Maureen Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 March 2009
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 21 lessons featuring the work of 16 teachers. They held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at strategic and curriculum planning, records of pupils' progress, school documentation and monitoring records of teaching and learning. Inspectors analysed 149 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as 29 from staff and 150 from pupils.

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

- The extent to which consistently above average attainment is linked to the level of challenge in lessons.
- How well cross-curricular links are supported by information and communication technology (ICT).
- The cohesiveness of leadership and management at all levels in planning for improvement and evaluating impact.
- How far lessons provide learning opportunities for pupils of different abilities, in particular by extending the learning of more-able pupils.

Information about the school

St Mary's Catholic Primary is a larger than average-sized voluntary aided school with a Nursery, taking pupils from three to 11 years. Fifty-two children attend the Nursery on a part-time basis and there are two Reception classes. Years 2 and 6 are streamed in ability sets for mathematics. This system is currently being introduced in the rest of Key Stage 2.

The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with just under a quarter coming from other minority ethnic heritages. A growing number of families are joining the school from Eastern European countries. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. Although the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is smaller than found nationally, the proportion with statements of special educational needs is about average.

The headteacher has led the school since September 2010.

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

This is an outstanding school. Since the last inspection, it has successfully and rapidly addressed the issues identified for improvement under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher. The school gives outstanding value for money because pupils are making good progress in their learning, leading to very high attainment and outstanding achievement.

Improvement has been galvanised at all levels. The governing body has undertaken a wholesale review of the school's performance, has embraced the drive for improvement with determination, and is providing effective support. The staff are wholeheartedly behind the headteacher in her quest to provide the best possible learning environment for the pupils. Teaching is good and improving rapidly, with many examples of exemplary practice. Assessment is also good overall, but not of consistently high quality in all classes in the school. These good features, combined with robust planning and the outstanding care, guidance and support that are provided, stimulate pupils' outstanding personal development. A vivid, imaginative, and creative curriculum provides exciting opportunities for the pupils to develop their talents for music, art and sport to the full.

The Catholic ethos influences every aspect of school life. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are deeply appreciative of the efforts of the staff to provide a safe and caring environment: 'They listen to us, they care about us,' pupils say. Pupils confirm that the school is a very safe environment where 'everybody is kind to each other' and 'there's not really anything that can be improved'. Parents and carers agree, paying tribute to the headteacher and staff in comments such as: 'Our experience has been nothing short of exceptional. We cannot praise St Mary's staff highly enough.'

Because pupils love their school, their attendance is high. Their exemplary behaviour at all times, both in lessons and around the school, their unfailing courtesy and their outstanding awareness of, and engagement in, a healthy lifestyle, leave them extremely well prepared for success in their future lives.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well managed, provides the children with a stimulating and enjoyable curriculum, and has made good use of the outdoor space to provide a learning environment that is well matched to the children's needs.

Accurate self-evaluation has informed measures to consolidate and improve upon good teaching practice, leading to a steep upward trend in pupil performance. As a result, pupils are making more consistent progress, lessons are more challenging,

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and leaders at all levels evaluate the impact of their actions effectively and plan for improvement. The speed with which the school has moved forward, especially in the past year, and its outstanding outcomes, demonstrate that the school has outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and assessment by:
 - introducing more clarity and consistency in marking, aligning it more closely to learning intentions
 - setting clearer expectations and guidance about how pupils can improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding because the school has maintained consistently high and improving levels of attainment since the last inspection. Samples of work, assessment information and attainment seen in lessons, together with pupils' continuing very high attendance, indicate that this trend will continue for current Year 6 pupils. Although attainment is outstanding in English and mathematics, particularly at the higher levels, pupils also achieve impressively in other aspects of their education. Some become skilful musicians and many develop their artistic talents impressively; pupils also achieve well in sport. They take a keen interest in the world around them, gaining valuable insights into scientific discovery, and become familiar with cultures other than their own. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress.

Pupils are extremely responsible. This is seen in the extent to which they care about each other and the respect they show to staff and visitors. Pupils have high expectations of themselves and of each other. Their contribution to the community is exemplary. They support many charities, for example raising over £2,600 for LEPR Health in Action on their own initiative, and they are actively involved in the local parish.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	1

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

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Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The school provides outstanding care for its pupils, and they consequently flourish in every way. Pupils' academic progress is systematically tracked and interventions are well directed. A wide range of partnerships has been established with support services, including speech, music and art therapy, to help pupils with specific needs.

A rich and diverse curriculum encourages pupils to develop their talents to the full, for example by engaging their sporting interests through participation in local competitions. Parents and carers say that they are 'very pleased to see lots more after school activities' which cater for a wide range of interests, including Gaelic Football and Taekwondo. Impressive displays of art abound throughout the school. In creating accurate models of mythical characters, building replicas of Second World War fighter planes, and making the African artwork displayed in the dining hall, pupils develop their imaginations and learn valuable design and technical skills. These activities link directly to their overall development as articulate, confident and considerate young people, well placed for success in their subsequent education. The school has focused strongly on developing teachers' planning to match pupils' needs more closely. Facilities for ICT have been improved with the updating of the computer suite, and the use of assessment to inform academic guidance has become routine throughout the school, although the quality of guidance provided in marking is variable, resulting in not all pupils knowing precisely what they need to do to improve their work. Teaching is good, confirming the school's own self-evaluation, and some is outstanding. The most successful lessons engage pupils in continuous dialogue, set a brisk pace and set high expectations. In one exemplary mathematics lesson, for example, where pupils were learning to how use a Carroll Diagram, the teacher's strong subject knowledge and excellent relationship with the pupils stimulated them to learn. They were provided with challenge that suited their varying abilities, and they responded with a high degree of independence, learning to apply analytical skills for themselves. The fostering of receptive pupil attitudes has been a major factor in encouraging pupils to achieve outstanding outcomes.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The drive and ambition of the headteacher and staff have had an outstanding impact. A highly productive partnership has been established with parents and carers, with one parent noting 'significant improvement in communication between school and parents in the information provided on children's progress'.

Following training, the governing body now understands how to interpret performance data and has a more informed approach to holding the school to account and understanding what it needs to do to improve. Members of the governing body ensure that safeguarding procedures are stringently enforced and risk assessments are thorough. The school's highly inclusive philosophy ensures outstanding equality of opportunity for all its pupils. All staff are trained in child protection and are vigilant in looking after pupils' welfare. Very effective partnerships have been established, for example with the local cluster of schools and with private feeder nurseries to aid transition into the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school's contribution to community cohesion at local and international levels is good, but it is still working on developing its links with different cultural communities in the wider national context.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children benefit from a well-run and well-equipped setting. They are happy and relaxed with the staff, who supervise them vigilantly and provide them with a wide range of activities to help them learn. The curriculum is well matched to children's needs and abilities. They choose their own activities, work well in groups and on their own, and respond positively to guidance. Because the children are well looked after and feel secure in their environment, they thrive and make good progress. Transition for children entering the Early Years Foundation Stage from private nurseries is facilitated by a good system of liaison to ensure their entry is as seamless as possible. Many parents and carers have commented that their children enter Nursery, settle in quickly and are very happy.

Children in the Nursery classes have access to a delightful outside garden area. They are encouraged to be creative. For example, while one child was threading different coloured pasta onto a thread to make a necklace, learning valuable skills of patience and dexterity, a group of children in the garden were using a magnifying glass to look at leaves on the ground. They were excited to discover that some were brown and some were yellow due to autumn changes after the leaves had fallen from the trees.

The two Reception classes are in the main school building, where the children are prepared well for their transition to Year 1. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader monitors the quality of teaching and children's progress regularly, analyses the data, and bases planning on improving attainment. The variety of learning activities, the free-flow between the two classes and the area outside, and their ability to collaborate helps the children to become independent learners, and contribute well to their good personal, social and emotional development.

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

A higher than average proportion of parents and carers returned completed questionnaires. Parents and carers are highly positive about the school, especially about how much their children enjoy the 'lovely safe environment'. Almost all said they are happy with their children's experience at the school and that their children are safe there. Many of the parents' views are reflected in the observation that St

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Mary's is 'a friendly and caring school that works hard to improve the life chances of all the children that pass through its doors'.

There was no consensus of negative comment. Although some parents and carers feel that their children could be challenged even further, and some said that their children would benefit from more support, many more feel that the provision is excellent, and that their children's needs are well catered for. Overall parents and carers share a general sense that the school is improving rapidly, many of their views being reflected in the observation that the school has 'very hard-working teachers and an extremely hard-working leader who strives hardest to keep up the high standards'.

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 149 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 470 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	105	70	44	29	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	116	77	33	22	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	71	47	72	48	5	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	73	48	65	43	9	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	69	46	72	48	5	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	63	42	73	48	11	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	78	52	69	46	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)	61	40	63	42	8	5	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	70	46	63	42	10	7	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	83	55	56	37	2	1	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	71	47	67	44	7	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	99	66	45	30	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	100	66	45	30	3	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



7 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, London SE9 1UF

Thank you very much for welcoming my colleagues and me to your school. On behalf of the team, I would like to thank the school council and those of you who met with us at lunchtime to tell us all about the many wonderful things that you do. I am pleased to be able to tell you that you go to an outstanding school. These are some of the things that really stand out.

- You are very punctual, extremely well behaved, friendly and kind to each other.
- You work very hard, are attentive to your teachers, and make good progress in your lessons.
- You are very generous, and help people who have less than you.
- All those who lead and manage your school work hard to give you the best possible education, and look after you very well.

Although yours is an outstanding school, I have asked your teachers to help you to learn even better by providing you with clearer expectations and guidance in their marking, so that you know exactly what you need to do to improve more quickly. You can help by continuing to work hard and asking for help when you need it.

Again, thank you for your kind welcome, and for your friendly and very interesting conversations with us.

With best wishes for the future,

Yours sincerely

John Anthony
Lead inspector

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