

St Mary's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103843
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	376978
Inspection dates	18–19 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Susan Walsh

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Hancox
Headteacher	Anne Maher
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2006
School address	Mill Street Brierley Hill DY5 2TH
Telephone number	01384 818435
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Registered childcare provision	St Mary's Pre-School for Little People
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	30
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	7 January 2009

Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	18–19 October 2011
Inspection number	376978

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 15 lessons or parts of lessons led by seven different teachers. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at development plans, its records of pupils' progress, and minutes from meetings of the governing body, as well as other documents. They scrutinised 72 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as questionnaires from pupils and staff.

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

- Is the school meeting the needs of the increasing proportion of pupils with minority ethnic heritages and what is the impact of support for pupils who are known to speak English as an additional language on their progress?
- Are teachers now more confident when using assessment information to inform learning?
- Have the recent developments in the Early Years Foundation Stage enhanced children's progress and how well is the outdoors used to promote learning?

Information about the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is rising and is now above average, as is the proportion of pupils whose first language is not believed to be English. These pupils come from a wide range of different ethnic backgrounds and include pupils of Traveller heritage. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average but the proportion of pupils with a statement of needs is above average. The pre-school provision that is managed by the school's governing body was included in this inspection.

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 where pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages get on very well together. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and this is reflected in their consistently kind and considerate behaviour. As one pupil said, 'We are just making the world a lot better.' This desire is thoroughly reflected in pupils' thoughts and prayers that are displayed throughout school. They have compassion for those less fortunate than themselves and particularly understand the difficulties of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils take a considerable amount of pride in the school. They feel exceptionally safe and are confident that staff take their concerns seriously.

Children get off to a good start in the pre-school and Reception class, because they both offer an interesting learning environment reinforced by high quality adult support. Although improvements have been made to the way children's progress is assessed, the school is not making the best use of this information to make a rigorous judgement about their skills on entry and to analyse variations in outcomes for different groups of children. Pupils make good progress through Key Stages 1 and 2 because of good teaching combined with a good curriculum. Attainment is above average by the end of Year 6 and pupils achieve well. Although progress is good, it is more uneven in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. This is because of minor variations in the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2, for example, occasionally introductions to lessons are too long. In particular, more-able pupils have to sit and listen, relatively unchallenged, when they could be getting on with their work. Significant improvements have been made to the quality of marking and to the way academic targets are used to support learning. Nevertheless, marking and guidance varies from outstanding to satisfactory. Consequently, some pupils in Key Stage 2 do not always get the very best advice about how to improve their work.

The leadership and ambition of the headteacher, senior managers and the governing body have been pivotal to continuously developing a school where every child is valued and enabled to succeed. Morale is high and belief in the school's success runs through all levels of staff. There is a good awareness of the school's overarching strengths and weaknesses and development planning accurately focuses on those areas where there is the most need for improvement. The impact made by coordinators has improved and they are now more involved in monitoring teaching. However, their lesson observations do not always pay enough attention to the way teaching strategies impact on learning and as a result some of the judgements made by coordinators are over generous. The use of data is improving and much has been

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done to improve the accuracy of assessments. A close eye is kept on the progress of individual pupils but the analysis of the progress of different groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is less rigorous. Additionally, not enough has been done to investigate the impact of intervention programmes for different groups of learners.

Attainment is rising, particularly by the end of Key Stage 1. The curriculum is much improved and pupils see learning as relevant and fun. Additionally, more pupils are now attending school regularly. All this reflects the school's good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Address variations in the pace of learning in Key Stage 2 by:
 - making certain that introductions to lessons are not too long and always contain suitable challenge for all pupils
 - addressing inconsistencies in the quality of marking and the use of targets.
- Develop the impact of coordinators by:
 - making sure careful links are made between teaching and pupils' progress during lesson observations
 - improving the rigour of data analysis in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - ensuring that the progress of different groups of pupils and the impact of interventions are closely tracked.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

When children enter the Reception class, their skills are usually below those expected for their age, however, by the time they leave Year 6 attainment is above average. In recent years, pupils' progress has been good, but it is more uneven in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning and their good behaviour make a very important contribution to their good achievement. They work hard in lessons and share a determination to succeed. Pupils frequently help each other with tasks and cooperate well. A strong focus on linking sounds to letters and developing reading skills has boosted pupils' progress particularly in Key Stage 1. The frequent practising of reading skills is encouraged and carefully monitored through the completion of reading records. Pupils enjoy writing and are developing a sophisticated vocabulary. They are able to empathise with the feelings of others and this is very evident in pupils' writing about evacuees in World War 2. Skilled learning support assistants successfully reshape teachers' explanations and make certain that those pupils who find learning hard are able to fully understand the concepts that are being taught. Consequently, they contribute well to the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The quality of support for pupils known to speak English as an additional language is much improved because staff have received additional training. These pupils make the same good progress as

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others during lessons.

Pupils' personal development is exceptionally strong and is at the heart of the school's work. Pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong and the majority develop high levels of self-discipline. This is reflected in the very calm ethos of the school. Pupils do much to contribute to the school and local communities. This includes pupils belonging to the school council, the eco committee, supporting other pupils and raising substantial money for charities. Pupils understand the need to take regular exercise and to eat healthily. They thoroughly enjoy activities such as Irish dancing. Pupils have extensive opportunities to develop their social skills through activities that need cooperation. They have a very good understanding of their own cultures. A concerted effort has been made to acknowledge and celebrate a wide range of faiths and cultures and the many visits to various places of worship are reflected in the high quality displays around school. Attendance rates are rapidly improving and there are fewer instances of persistent absence. Pupils' good basic skills, together with their maturity, self-assurance and ability to work as part of a team, means that they are well prepared for their next stage of education.

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	2
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
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The majority of lessons are lively and capture pupils' interest well. Many are based on real-life situations and resources, including information and communication technology, are often used effectively to support learning. The school's work on improving the use of assessment has had a positive impact on pupils' learning and

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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has helped to accelerate progress. Work is usually very well matched to pupils' needs especially when they are working independently. Occasionally in Key Stage 2, teachers' thorough planning does not fully translate into good learning in lessons. This can be because the introductions to lessons are over long and during these lengthy introductions more-able pupils are marking time rather than developing new skills. There are some examples of exceptionally thorough marking which gives pupils crystal clear indications about how to improve their work, but the quality of marking and target setting is inconsistent in Key Stage 2.

While continuing to have a good focus on reading, writing and mathematics, the curriculum also now ensures that pupils have many more opportunities to develop their talents in other areas. A good range of memorable and valuable experiences greatly add to pupils' enjoyment. These are reflected in the vibrant displays around the school which celebrate many aspects of pupils' work. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the 'Child Initiated Learning Week' when the curriculum closely reflected their interests. Residential visits help pupils to develop their social skills and independence and a broad range of visits and visitors brings learning to life. There is a good variety of clubs for a small school and many opportunities for pupils to keep fit that range from zumba to football for Key Stages 1 and 2. Good links with local secondary schools have extended opportunities for pupils, particularly those relating to the arts.

The school provides a friendly and happy environment. Pupils from all backgrounds are very well-known as individuals and have confidence in the staff. Well-targeted support is offered to pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or other additional needs. Those with complex additional needs are particularly well supported and are fully included in the life of the school. The support for the children of Traveller families is very good. This has a significant impact on the personal development of these pupils as they develop their confidence and a huge sense of pride in their work. They are particularly pleased when their work is published in newspapers that are intended for Travellers. The school's systems to monitor and promote regular attendance are successful and this is reflected in rising attendance rates.

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 ambitious vision and high expectations of the headteacher, governing body and other leaders and managers are underpinned by good management systems. Regular

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meetings to discuss pupils' progress are central to the school's success. If any pupil, whatever their ability level, is in danger of falling behind, swift action is taken. The role of the curriculum coordinator has been developed and many coordinators are now having a good impact on the quality of provision. For example, a successful focus on the use of phonics and developing pupils' reading skills has raised levels of attainment especially by the end of Key Stage 1. However, there is still more to be done to ensure that their observations of teaching and learning are always rigorous and that the progress of different groups of pupils is carefully analysed.

Governance is good. The governing body provides the school with effective support and challenge, as well as ensuring that statutory requirements are met. Its members take a particularly rigorous approach to safeguarding including health and safety. Consequently, safeguarding procedures are good. The school makes certain that adults who work with children are carefully vetted and ensures that staff are alert to safeguarding issues. The school's actions to promote equal opportunities are good; consequently, all groups of pupils achieve well. The school's work to promote community cohesion is good. Excellent links with its neighbouring community are exemplified by the way the pupils have worked with the church and the police on local matters. The school teaches pupils to celebrate and value differences. A link is developing with a school in the Gambia and there are links with a school in a contrasting locality.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents and carers are very pleased with provision in the pre-school and the Reception class. Good leadership and management have resulted in significant improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage. Provision in the pre-school

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meets registration requirements and is of good quality. Children are offered an exciting range of activities that capture their interest and imagination and move their learning on. These activities are well supported by adults who use questioning effectively to model language for children. In the pre-school, systems for assessing children's skills have improved. Although information is recorded about children's level of skills on entry to and exit from the pre-school, the analysis of these important measurements is not yet rigorous enough.

Provision is also good in the Reception class. Children are provided with a good range of interesting activities that make learning fun. This, combined with high quality adult support, means that children make rapid progress and often leave the Reception class with above average skills. Both the pre-school and the Reception class make the best use of the limited outdoor facilities. Plans are in place to improve the quality of this space. While information about the level of children's skills when they leave the Reception class is analysed to some extent, this analysis is not robust enough. Therefore, the school does not have the fine detail needed about the progress of different groups of children in different areas of learning that is necessary in order to plan the changes that will move good progress to outstanding.

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 a good response to the questionnaire. Parents and carers are very pleased with the quality of education provided by the school and many provided written comments praising the warm and caring environment and the friendly hard working staff. A small number of parents and carers raised individual issues which were looked into during the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's RC 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 72 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 192 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	67	24	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	48	67	24	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	37	51	33	46	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	58	28	39	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	54	32	44	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	51	34	47	0	0	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	46	37	51	2	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)	37	51	31	43	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	49	35	49	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	44	33	46	4	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	53	30	42	2	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	40	56	31	43	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	61	26	36	1	1	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.

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.



20 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's RC Primary School, Brierley Hill, DY5 2TH

It was a delight and a privilege to visit your school. All of the team really enjoyed talking to you all and listened very carefully to what you had to say. It's clear that you are very proud of your school. No wonder – it is good! You say that your teachers are nice and kind, and we agree. They do keep you very safe and value each and every one of you. We were very impressed by your good behaviour and the way you contribute such a lot to the school through the school council and the eco committee. You are working hard to make the world a better place.

Teaching is good and you make good progress in many of your lessons. Your standards of attainment are above those reached by children at most other schools. Children in the pre-school and the Reception class get off to a good start. Pupils also make good progress in Key Stage 1. Although your progress is good overall in Key Stage 2, it can be a little uneven and we have asked your teachers to improve this. We noticed that sometimes the introductions to lessons can be a bit too long and those of you who find learning easy have to listen when you could be getting on with your work. We also noticed that some teachers provide you with very helpful marking and set you targets that tell you exactly how to improve your work. However, in Key Stage 2 occasionally marking is not quite as helpful and teachers do not always remember to refer to your targets. Again, we have asked staff to improve this. The leaders and managers at your school are doing a good job. They are working very hard to make your school into one of the very best. They have lots of information about how you are doing and we have asked them to make even better use of this information.

You can help your school to improve further by continuing to try very hard in all your lessons and making sure you come to school every day.

Yours sincerely

Susan Walsh
Lead inspector

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