

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School Stockport

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106124
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	377359
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2012
Lead inspector	Andrée Keddle

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	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Brearley
Headteacher	Cathy Cunliffe
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2007
School address	Roman Road Heaton Norris Stockport SK4 1RF
Telephone number	0161 4805319
Fax number	0161 4298097
Email address	headteacher@st-marysrc.stockport.sch.uk



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Introduction

Inspection team

Andree Keddle

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed seven teachers in 12 lessons of which seven were joint observations with the deputy headteacher. Meetings were held with a group of pupils, members of the governing body and school staff including the deputy headteacher. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including safeguarding records, minutes of governing body meetings, the school improvement plan, policies, teachers' planning and assessment data showing pupils' attainment and progress. The inspector could not take account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection as there were none available. However, 70 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed along with others completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. About a fifth of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and a few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by the school is above average. The proportion supported by additional help from outside the school or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The school meets the government floor standard for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6. The school has achieved Healthy School status and the Active Mark.

During the inspection half of the permanent teaching staff, including the headteacher, were absent due to ill-health or maternity leave.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. The small cohorts mean that attainment varies from year to year. Over time, pupils make generally satisfactory progress to reach broadly average levels of attainment by Year 6. The rate of progress is in direct proportion to the quality of teaching, which is mainly satisfactory. The school is not judged as good because teaching is not consistently good, resulting in pupils making greatly variable rates of progress as they pass through the school.
- The school is improving and standards are rising in Key Stage 1, including in writing, as a result of better teaching focused on motivating pupils to write. Some pupils are making good progress as the result of good teaching, particularly in Years 5 and 6. However, inconsistencies in teaching mean that teaching overall is judged as satisfactory. In the Early Years Foundation Stage children make satisfactory progress although assessments of their progress are sometimes limited to activities directed by the teacher. Also, not enough use is made of the outdoor areas to help children develop their skills. The progress of different groups of pupils, such as those who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, is satisfactory overall.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils are good. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that everyone gets on with each other well. They have excellent manners and are polite to adults and to each other. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and, in the best lessons, show a high degree of cooperation and teamwork.
- The school's leadership has correctly identified some of the areas for improvement, such as writing, and is taking appropriate action to improve attainment and achievement. Training and professional development for teachers have improved the quality of teaching. Monitoring is not sufficiently rigorous. Assessment information is collected, but is not always evaluated well enough to hold teachers to account for the progress that pupils make.

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?

- Raise standards, in English and mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 1 and in writing, by:
 - increasing the proportion of consistently good or better teaching
 - ensuring work is well matched to pupils' prior knowledge and skills so that they are sufficiently challenged to take their next steps in learning, including in guided reading sessions
 - ensuring teachers identify clear criteria for learning so that pupils and teachers can evaluate how successfully pupils have completed their tasks
 - making sure that all lessons are well paced with opportunities for all pupils to take part
 - improving the quality and consistency of feedback to pupils through teachers' marking and ensuring that they have time to respond to the guidance that they have received.

- Improve the quality of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - making more regular and effective use of the outdoor area
 - increasing the training and continuing professional development for all staff to ensure that they are fully up to date with all aspects of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics)
 - reorganising assessment activities, so that more time is given to assessing children through their child-initiated activities.

- Improve the rigour of monitoring by leaders at all levels by:
 - evaluating pupils' attainment and progress data to hold teachers to account more effectively
 - evaluating assessment information more frequently and sharing this with the governing body to ensure that the impact of the school's work to raise standards can be closely monitored in order to hold the school to account more effectively
 - ensuring that subject leaders have regular opportunities to monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment and progress in their subjects.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

From starting points that are below average pupils make variable but, overall, satisfactory rates of progress. Standards in Key Stage 1 are rising with increasing numbers of pupils working at broadly average levels. Overall, however, attainment remains below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make variable rates of progress as they pass through Key Stage 2; sometimes it is slower than expected and sometimes it is rapid as the result of good teaching. Consequently, results in end of Year 6 test results have varied in recent years. For example in 2010, pupils' attainment in English was below average, but in 2011 it was above average including in reading. Current attainment of pupils in Year 6 is below average in reading, writing and mathematics. The same variable pattern is apparent in different year groups currently in the school. Pupils show good attitudes to reading and say that they enjoy borrowing books from the school library. Daily sessions are in place in

the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 to teach pupils about sounds and letters in order to help them to read. However, the quality of teaching is variable and not all staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage have had training in this aspect of their work.

Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those who do not speak English as their first language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported by teaching assistants and make mainly satisfactory and sometimes good progress as a result. Well-targeted intervention programmes result in some pupils making greatly accelerated progress. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are benefiting from individual reading programmes and this is evident in their improving skills and in their confidence and enjoyment of reading. Parental and carers' questionnaires show that they are happy with their children's achievement. Inspection evidence judges that pupils' achievement is satisfactory, rather than good. Analysis of past test data shows that there are no significant differences in the performance of particular groups. The varying rates of progress seen reflect the quality of teaching and impact on all groups equally.

Quality of teaching

In the best lessons pupils work at a fast pace on challenging tasks which are well matched to their prior knowledge and skills. Teachers' expectations are high and specific criteria for learning are identified and shared with the pupils so they can evaluate how successful they have been. All pupils are fully engaged and involved in activities. For example, in a science lesson in upper Key Stage 2 the teacher displayed a checklist on the board. Pupils had to evaluate whether they had carried out a fair test, made predictions and drawn conclusions and displayed their results in a graph. All pupils worked cooperatively and organised their roles in the group activity quickly and sensibly. Not all lessons move at such a brisk pace and sometimes this is because pupils have to wait to take turns. In lessons where the teaching is satisfactory learning intentions are not always clear. The work is not challenging enough and not always closely matched to the different ability levels of groups of pupils. For example, in guided reading the activities for pupils to work on if they are not reading with the teacher are a free choice and do not always support them in taking their next steps in learning. There is not always enough rigour in ensuring that pupils make good progress in independent activities to improve their reading and comprehension skills. In the Early Years Foundation Stage little use is made of the outdoor area as a resource to develop children's skills and knowledge.

Feedback to pupils through teachers' marking varies in quality. Positive comments are used very well by teachers to encourage pupils and raise their self-esteem, but there is insufficient detail given to direct pupils as to what they have to do to improve. In some books some comments are intended to help pupils improve, but no time is given to them to respond to the suggestions made by their teachers. In the Early Years Foundation Stage not enough of the assessment of children's learning is undertaken while observing the children working independently. In Key Stage 1, although standards are rising, very few pupils are working at the higher Level 3. A project to inspire pupils to write through drama and use of their imagination has been successful in engaging pupils and improving their writing skills. In a writing lesson in Key Stage 1, good teaching meant that pupils were successfully writing direct speech as the result of clear modelling by the teacher. They also used question marks correctly when writing a question.

The school's learning environment is good with a range of support materials on display to help pupils to learn. In addition, pupils' work is celebrated and the displays reflect the broad

and enriched curriculum. For example, some pupils have written about the traditional activities which take place at Chinese New Year following a visit from a member of the Chinese community. The school makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils' enjoyment of a 'Caribbean Day' is evident in their writing and in the photographs taken of them learning to play steel drums. Pupils enjoy a good range of educational visits to enrich their learning, such as to a local stately home as part of a topic on the Tudors. In the questionnaires completed by parents and carers almost all express positive views about the way their children are taught. Inspectors judge that the quality of teaching is satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and have great confidence that adults will quickly resolve any issues that may occur. They say that this is a friendly and caring school and the inspector agrees. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their above-average attendance rates. Pupils are polite and are very quick to hold doors open for staff and visitors, without being asked to. In the best lessons pupils show a high degree of enthusiasm for learning as the result of fast-paced activities which are interesting and challenging. For example, this was seen in a lesson in upper Key Stage 2 when pupils wrote metaphors to describe a pet or a member of their family. They were keen to create their metaphors and followed the teacher's examples, using humour where possible.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in various situations, including when using the internet. They have heard and understand the term 'cyber-bullying' and they feel confident in telling an adult should it happen to them. The school takes a proactive approach to anti-bullying and pupils have a good understanding of which actions and words constitute bullying. Pupils are able to reflect on what they have learned about the appropriate ways to treat other people and show positive attitudes towards people different from themselves. Through the questionnaires pupils, parents and carers show they have very positive views about behaviour and safety in school. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils' behaviour and safety are good.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders and the governing body have correctly identified the broad areas for improvement, such as writing in Key Stage 1. A writing project and staff training to improve teaching are raising standards. Moreover, attainment in reading and mathematics in Key Stage 1 is rising too. In upper Key Stage 2 pupils are making accelerated progress and making up a legacy of underachievement for some. This is helping to raise achievement. These improvements demonstrate the school's capacity to improve further.

Data on pupils' attainment and progress are collected regularly and there is detailed information about individual pupils which is often used well. However, this is not summarised well enough for senior leaders to make clear comparisons between different groups, classes and cohorts as they pass through the school. The school does not evaluate the progress of these from its own monitoring data, although it does use external analyses relating to performance in national tests. This means that it does not intervene to correct dips in performance as quickly as it might. Consequently, over time, pupils' rates of progress have been too variable. The school works effectively to tackle discrimination and this contributes to the harmonious community. It also ensures that pupils of all abilities and

backgrounds have equal opportunities for development but its effectiveness is more variable.

The governing body ensures that appropriate policies are in place and that statutory duties are fulfilled. Procedures to safeguard pupils meet government requirements. Information received by the governing body from school leaders is not sufficiently detailed for the effective monitoring of the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. This limits their effectiveness in holding the school to account.

Subject leaders support their colleagues with information and training related to their role. However, they have few opportunities to monitor standards in their subject through lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' books and the examination of summary assessment data. Monitoring by senior leaders and training have helped to improve teaching but good practice is not sufficiently shared. The curriculum is only satisfactory because, although it is broad and enriched, the impact on pupils' attainment and progress is too variable. Good opportunities are provided which enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and pupils have opportunities for reflection, such as through their work on writing acrostic poems about the meaning of Lent.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



28 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School Stockport, SK4 1RF

Thank you very much for making me so welcome and talking to me when I visited your school recently. Thank you for giving your opinions in the questionnaires and telling me how happy and safe you feel in school. You are very polite and proud of your school. You behave well and work well together on group activities. Your above-average attendance rates show how much you enjoy coming to school.

The teaching in your school is satisfactory and you make satisfactory progress in your learning by the time that you leave in Year 6. Sometimes, some of you make good progress when you experience good teaching. Those of you in Key Stage 1 are making better progress in your writing as the result of a writing project which you say that you enjoy. You enjoy learning about other cultures and religions, as demonstrated by your positive comments about the recent 'Caribbean Day.' You think about important issues talked about in assembly and understand how you should treat other people.

Your headteacher and senior teachers ensure that St Mary's is a satisfactory school. I have asked that they make your school become even better by more carefully checking on the progress that you make and ensuring that there is more consistently good teaching. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, I have asked that the outdoor area is used more to give you more opportunities to learn outside.

You can help by continuing to work hard and attending school regularly.

Yours sincerely

Andree Kettle
Lead inspector

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