

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124356
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	380869
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Evans

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	165
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Pennington
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ann-Marie Cheadle
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 January 2009
<b>School address</b>	Cruso Street Leek ST13 8BW
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<b>Email address</b>	office@st-marys-leek.staffs.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and observed eight teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and pupils, parents and carers, the special educational needs coordinator and Early Years Foundation Stage leaders. Inspectors observed the school's work and the arrangements in place to safeguard pupils. They looked at the school's improvement plan and its self-evaluation, assessment and tracking data that teachers use to monitor pupils' progress, school and local authority monitoring information, lesson plans and school policies. Questionnaire returns from 55 parents and carers were analysed as well as returns 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.

- Do pupils make sufficient progress across the school, especially boys in their writing?
- What are the strengths in teaching and the curriculum that contribute to pupils' progress?
- How effective is the school's tracking and assessment system?
- Are leaders at all levels of management actively involved in school improvement and are secure systems fully embedded for further improvement?

## Information about the school

This is a smaller than average size primary school. Most pupils are White British. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or with a statement of special educational needs are below those found in most schools. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The governing body manages a before- and after-school club which is operated on the school site. Between 2005 and 2010, there was significant discontinuity of leadership. In 2010, the governing body pursued a goal of joining with other Catholic schools and this ultimately led to the existing federation, which was formed in January 2011. This has helped to secure the long-term future of the school under the leadership of the present headteacher, who was acting headteacher for one year before being appointed to her present post in September 2011. The school has been accredited with the Healthy Schools status.

**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 is a good school. The outstanding governing body has demonstrated very effective leadership in securing federation status with other similar schools. The benefits for the school have been immediate in terms of ensuring that there is experienced and capable leadership, a wider range of professional expertise and collective resources that are shared between the schools. Curriculum leadership across the schools and collaboration between the teachers are in place, and opportunities to use these to increase cross-curricular work are developing well. Partnerships also support enrichment opportunities, such as the Modern Foreign Language link, which allow a majority of the pupils to take part in a variety of activities after school.

The headteacher has a very clear vision for school improvement and she has created high expectations among all staff, who are effusive in their praise of the support, encouragement and opportunities made available to them. Parents and carers are fully involved in supporting their children's learning, and this allows the school to act as a focus for community life. Pupils enjoy the opportunities that this brings, such as taking part in various festivals, weekly acts of worship and celebrations. However, pupils have few opportunities to meet with pupils from cultures outside the school, or to learn about how others live in different parts of the United Kingdom and abroad. This means that they have little knowledge or interest in events beyond their own locality.

The school demonstrates many strengths, often arising from its small size, which create a strong family feeling; pupils behave exceptionally well and support each other, both in work and recreation. Care, guidance and support are good and, because the pupils are so well known to the teachers and their progress is carefully tracked, there is effective equality of opportunity that supports every pupil. Safeguarding arrangements are good and monitored effectively, with pupils, parents and carers all agreeing that this is a safe school.

In recent years, children have tended to start in the Reception Year with standards below those expected nationally. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, they exceed the levels expected. Attainment is above average, the pupils are demonstrating good progress and their achievement is good overall. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and others identified as needing additional support demonstrate the same good progress as other groups of pupils. Pupils' good achievement is the outcome of good teaching and effective teamwork

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between the teachers and teaching assistants. The teachers plan and deliver successful lessons, supported by the effective use of information and communication technology and with the positive help of the teaching assistants. At the moment, standards in writing, particularly for boys and those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, fall below those in reading and mathematics, but there are effective opportunities to promote extended writing.

Because the school has a clear vision for securing its future, has successfully addressed the issues raised at the last inspection and shows effective self-evaluation that enables it to prioritise issues for continued improvement, there is a good capacity for sustained improvement. This capacity is enhanced by the school's effective leadership and strong governance.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning from good to outstanding throughout the school by ensuring that:
  - there is consistently good pace and challenge in lessons
  - the marking of pupils' work always helps them to move to the next step in their learning
  - boys are given greater opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum.
- Improve the school's work to promote community cohesion by providing pupils with better opportunities to develop their understanding of cultural diversity, particularly of national and global communities.

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

**2**

Evidence from lessons and work books shows that, from their starting points, most pupils make good progress. Pupils begin school with standards below those expected for their age and make good progress to leave Year 6 with above-average attainment. Attainment levels are rising and in 2011 they were significantly above average. Within this overall picture, writing remains relatively weaker than reading and mathematics, but standards in writing are improving rapidly. Systems for tracking and monitoring individual pupils' progress are effective and enable all, including those identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who are seen as needing additional support and pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, to achieve well. Where necessary, well-focused individual action plans are set up to help pupils who are underachieving get back on track.

Pupils enjoy their learning and they are very keen to learn, especially when they are actively involved, and this contributes to their good achievement. This was seen in a Year 5 lesson when pupils participated in a 'beat the clock' game to solve multiplication and division problems within a specified time. In many lessons information and communication technology is used well to support learning and to

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motivate pupils.

The pupils agree strongly that the school is a safe place, a view shared unanimously by parents and carers in their questionnaire responses. Within the school, reflecting its strong ethos, the pupils take good care of each other, supported by exemplary behaviour and the school's strong moral code.

Actions to promote attendance are extensive and have a high profile in school. As a result, attendance is improving as longer term absences are successfully reduced. Pupils understand about healthy living, making healthy choices of their food, and participating fully in the sport activities available. They make a good contribution to both the school and the local community. Within the school, the school council is very active and fully involved in making decisions. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, but their understanding of other cultures is less strong than other areas.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

## How effective is the provision?

Inspired by good and occasionally outstanding teaching, pupils become confident learners. In most lessons, teaching builds pupils' learning successfully, step by step, with due attention to individual needs. High-quality teaching is based on strong relationships, lively and skilful delivery and, in the best lessons, systematic assessments of pupils' progress. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to

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

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make skilled adjustments to learning during lessons. There remain some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, but the headteacher has recognised this and has taken action to provide appropriate support. Marking is not consistent throughout the school and it does not always provide pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work. In most lessons, teaching assistants are briefed and managed well and they make a good contribution to pupils' learning.

Pupils are well known as individuals. Their personal, social and educational development is monitored effectively. This enables the school to identify and address the reasons for any decline in learning. Transition between classes and different phases of education is good. Work to engage parents and carers more in their children's education is developing well. Arrangements for the care of all pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, are well organised and effective. This good quality care, guidance and support, which includes well-organised breakfast and after-school clubs, contributes greatly to pupils' progress and personal development. The many well-attended enrichment activities that extend the curriculum beyond the normal school day also have positive impact on pupils' learning and enjoyment.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides positive direction and clear vision for school improvement. In this, she is supported well by the senior leadership team which is creating an effective school to which all members of staff are fully committed. The headteacher and senior leadership team drive improvement and embed ambition in all staff through their rigorous and accurate monitoring of teaching and the steps taken to improve learning. The headteacher has created a strong team of staff and governors, all of whom contribute to the school's accurate self-evaluation. This in turn leads to challenging targets for staff and pupils, which are kept under constant review by senior leaders and governors, who use the range of expertise on the governing body very well to support and challenge the school.

The visionary governing body, under the leadership of a very effective Chair, has been instrumental in taking the school towards federation and, in so doing, has given it a viable future. They are aware of their statutory duties and uphold them very well. Safeguarding arrangements are good, going beyond the statutory requirements, and

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early identification supports pupils who may need additional help. The school's good links with parents, carers, external agencies and other professionals benefit pupils' learning and wider welfare and contribute to school improvement. The school understands its own context and that of the local community, and it promotes these aspects of community cohesion well. Work is under way, through emerging links with other schools, to widen pupils' experience.

The fact that every pupil is so well known as an individual and their needs provided for means that there is good equality of opportunity and any discrimination is tackled effectively. The clear focus on school improvement, good use of financial and human resources across the federation and successful outcomes mean that the school provides good value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a good start for children. Children settle quickly in this caring environment and parents are able to accompany their children into school and see their work. Although skills and knowledge on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are generally below the level which is typically expected for their age, children make good progress and most reach or exceed the goals expected of children at the end of the Reception year. Most children are confident and friendly.

The learning environment is well organised with a good range of facilities. The outdoor area has limitations that the school is trying to improve, but the space is well used and the learning opportunities and progress of children are little affected. Children really enjoy working indoors and outdoors on their stimulating activities. Teaching is good and based on comprehensive planning. Adults give effective advice



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and children have a good understanding of how to keep safe. All welfare requirements are met and there is good support for children's well-being. Monitoring of progress is good with regular assessment activities and photographic records kept of attainment. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in all aspects of their learning.

Leaders have a clear understanding of strengths and are keen to improve still further.

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly satisfied with the school. Typical comments were: 'a wonderful school, fantastic headteacher, a very caring place and a good spiritual ethos'; 'My child is thriving at this school, and this is due I feel to the excellent teaching and caring attitude of the staff'; 'Over the three years my children have attended St Mary's I have seen leadership, behaviour and care for pupils improve greatly and this, I feel, is due to the strong leadership of the headteacher.' The inspection evidence supports these views. The needs of pupils are carefully assessed and met well. Progress is improving for all pupils and parents are kept well informed.

### 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 55 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 165 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	75	14	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	47	85	8	15	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	32	58	22	40	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	64	20	36	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	71	16	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	34	62	21	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	53	25	45	0	0	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)	26	47	25	45	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	31	56	23	42	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	56	21	38	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	53	24	44	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	41	75	13	24	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	40	73	15	27	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**

21 November 2011

Dear Pupils,



**Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Leek, ST13 8BW**

Thank you for the positive contribution that you made to our recent inspection. You made us feel very welcome. We enjoyed speaking to lots of you and seeing your work. This was very helpful in confirming what staff and parents and carers told us.

Your school has improved a lot since the last inspection. We were particularly impressed with the good progress that you make in lessons and the standard of your work in English and mathematics. Your behaviour around the school and your positive attitudes to learning in most lessons are exemplary. The good care, guidance and support ensures that everyone can achieve well and take full advantage of the many different opportunities on offer.

Teachers and teaching assistants work hard to improve your work and also make learning interesting. We have asked your teachers to keep up the good work and to ensure that:

- when they mark your work they always tell you how to improve and check that you take their advice
- the pace of all lessons and the challenges teachers set you help you make even more progress
- boys are helped to improve their skills in writing, because at the moment most are better at reading and mathematics
- you learn more about children and other people in other parts of the country and across the world, to help you understand better how people are different but also share similarities.

Everyone has worked really hard. You have played your part with your positive attitudes and the many contributions that you make to your school. I wish you all every future success.

Yours sincerely

David Evans  
Lead Inspector

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