

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	102425
Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	376721
Inspection dates	3–4 May 2012
Lead inspector	Martin Beale

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	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maureen Thorpe
Headteacher	Ann Shevlin
Date of previous school inspection	6 November 2008
School address	Rockingham Close Uxbridge Middlesex UB8 2UA
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Martin Beale

Additional Inspector

Akwil Gill

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Over 11 hours were spent observing teaching and learning in parts of 23 lessons taught by ten members of staff, holding discussions with pupils about their learning and hearing pupils read. Inspectors held meetings with staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised pupils' books, assessment data, and case studies of specific pupils. They also looked at evidence of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. The inspection team analysed 142 responses to the inspection questionnaire returned by parents and carers.

Information about the school

Half of the pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds in this average-sized school. One-third of the pupils speak English as an additional language and some are at an early stage of learning English. This represents a significant increase in recent years. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average and rising. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. Their needs are mostly associated with speech, language and communication. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Nursery and a Reception class. The school has received the Basic Skills Quality Mark. The school meets the current floor standards, which set the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

A breakfast and after-school club uses the school's premises. This provision is not managed by the governing body and, as such, is inspected separately.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. Its success is based on ambitious leadership at all levels, from the determined headteacher, through a highly cohesive staff team, to a challenging governing body. The excellent teaching of a rich curriculum to highly motivated pupils leads to their outstanding achievement and spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. The school lives its mission statement on a daily basis, so that pupils thrive in a harmonious family atmosphere in which they know how much they are all valued.
- Pupils make rapid progress and attainment is well above average by the end of Year 6. The recent attention paid to improving writing, particularly for the more-able boys, is reaping dividends, as is the action taken to increase the proportion of pupils working at levels above those expected in mathematics. Pupils apply their mathematical skills very well when solving problems, but are less secure when faced with open-ended investigational tasks.
- Pupils learn in a purposeful and very stimulating environment. Lessons grab their imagination quickly and drive learning forward at pace. Teaching is pitched carefully to meet each individual's needs and provides challenge for pupils at all levels.
- Pupils of all ages are tremendous ambassadors for the school through their outstanding behaviour and exceptionally positive attitudes to learning. This and the care and consideration they show for others help to generate a happy family atmosphere in which the pupils' learning and development can thrive.
- There is a continual drive to improve teaching and learning, through carefully checking classroom performance. Leaders at all levels are highly reflective and contribute significantly to the carefully planned actions to improve teaching. All have high expectations and are ambitious for what the pupils can achieve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities in mathematics for pupils to develop their investigational skills, so that they have greater confidence to test solutions and to be unafraid to learn by their mistakes.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children make very rapid progress in the Nursery and Reception classes from levels below those expected for their age on entry. Their attainment is above average by the end of Reception Year in all areas of learning. The children become independent by continually making decisions about their learning, selecting resources and initiating activities. They work very well together, taking turns and discussing their learning.

This excellent progress continues through the rest of the school. Typically, learning is fast paced and ensures the rapid development of the pupils' key skills. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make excellent progress also and generally reach national expectations by the end of Year 6. Pupils speaking English as an additional language make excellent progress also by being immersed in an environment rich in speaking and language.

Pupils develop key reading skills rapidly and their attainment is above average by the end of Year 2. This level of progress continues through Key Stage 2 and attainment is well above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils become avid readers, talking with great interest about the books they read and their favourite authors. Higher-order reading skills become well honed, as was seen when Year 3 pupils scanned text to prepare presentations about the wives of Henry VIII. Pupils write in a wide variety of styles and different subjects, using 'story maps' and other devices to plan extended pieces of writing. Their writing grabs the reader's attention, includes much refined and ambitious vocabulary and is backed up by neat handwriting.

Pupils strengthen their understanding of mathematics by readily applying their skills in different contexts. This includes Year 6 pupils solving complex money problems and Year 5 pupils practising graph drawing and interpretation in science. Pupils are more reticent when using trial and improvement methods, or searching for patterns, as they do not always realise they can learn by their mistakes.

Year 6 test results have been consistently well above average. Almost all pupils reach and the majority exceed levels expected for their age in English and mathematics, giving them a very firm platform for success in the future. Inspection evidence confirms the strongly expressed views of parents and carers about the rapid progress made by their children.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers, along with their children, are accurate in their praise for the high quality of the teaching. Teachers have high expectations and the most effective challenge the pupils' thinking through skilled and probing questioning, adapting their teaching according to the pupils' responses. The characteristics of the best teaching were seen in an outstanding Year 6 creative writing session. The teacher's high expectations, dynamic style and the use of a video clip grabbed and retained the pupils' attention from the lesson's outset. 'Talk-partner' discussions were very fruitful

in enabling pupils to share and generate further ideas for their writing. As in all classes, the additional adults made a very significant contribution to the learning of specifically identified pupils.

Pupils are very clear about their targets and are constantly required to reflect on the steps to take to meet them by highly effective and helpful marking. This creates a dialogue between teacher and pupil about how work can be improved or learning secured. Pupils also evaluate their work to clear criteria and assess the work of others constructively.

Reading is taught exceptionally well, from sharply focused sessions on the sounds made by letters, to developing skills of comprehension. Teachers promote attributes such as teamwork through collaboration on tasks and in discussion. The most-effective teaching requires pupils to think and to be creative and stimulates their imaginations when responding to literature and video clips. Drama is used skilfully to stimulate writing, such as when Year 5 pupils recorded silent movie scenes before preparing a film narrative. This engrossed the pupils totally, many of whom became lost in their writing.

Children are given a vast array of opportunities to learn in the Nursery and Reception classes. Activities are planned well to meet their needs and interests, through continuous provision between inside and outdoors. Sessions led by adults move at pace. Adults model language well and encourage independence very effectively.

By identifying with clarity and speed the specific difficulties of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, individualised action is put in place to tackle their targets. Teachers check progress carefully in class and in sharply focused short-term withdrawal sessions, so that programmes can be reviewed and adjusted.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Discussions and school records show that the excellent behaviour seen during the inspection is typical of daily school life. This view is shared by pupils and their parents and carers. Pupils live the school's values and work hard to fulfil the current goal of being more responsible. They know they are members of a caring community in which they all can play their part as prefects, buddies for newcomers, or representatives on the school council. Pupils move around the school very sensibly and quietly with the minimum need for supervision.

The pupils' exemplary classroom behaviour and high levels of attendance reflect their great desire to learn. There is a strong work ethic in all classrooms. Pupils are highly motivated, work cooperatively and are very considerate towards each other. Pupils take considerable responsibility for their behaviour by helping to shape the new 'traffic light' system of rewards and sanctions and annually agreeing rules for their classroom. Pupils strongly agree that these systems are consistently applied by all members of staff, so they are treated fairly.

Pupils feel very safe in school, a view that is very strongly endorsed by their parents and carers. Pupils are taught how to identify and minimise potential risks through

road safety training and the school's very robust approach to e-safety and on-line protection. Anti-bullying workshops have enabled a shared understanding of what constitutes bullying and how to deal with any incidents. Pupils are fully aware of the steps they should follow, but say that bullying simply does not occur. School records confirm that this is the case, apart from some very occasional name-calling or temporary falling-out between friends.

Leadership and management

The school is in a very strong position to meet its ambitions for the pupils and to continue on its path of improvement. In spite of its success, the headteacher tolerates no complacency and inspires the staff team to pull together to improve teaching and learning further. By using a wide variety of mechanisms to check the impact of teaching on the pupils' progress, the senior team is able to pinpoint where further training is needed. This has been highly productive in improving the performance of individual staff. Subject leaders make a strong contribution to driving improvement in their areas and supporting their colleagues. As a result, significant and sustained improvements have taken place in the pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics, behaviour, attendance and punctuality.

The governing body monitors the school's work rigorously and holds the headteacher to account for the pupils' achievement. It is well informed, challenging and fully involved in planning for the school's future. It takes very seriously also its responsibility for ensuring that safeguarding requirements are met. They pay very careful attention to detail and continually check to see whether more can be done, particularly in relation to the impact of changing new technology.

The curriculum focuses sharply on basic skills and their application across subjects. It brings learning to life through the themes pupils study and contributes to their exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and their excellent conduct. Pupils write their own prayers and Year 4 pupils have written letters from a disciple about his experience of Pentecost. The link with a Tanzanian school gives pupils experience of different peoples. Furthermore, the annual 'One World' week celebration of other cultures recognises similarity and diversity and the common values shared across different societies. The recent 'Mathematics Challenge Week' included Year 6 pupils participating in a borough-wide evening on problem-solving activities.

The highly productive partnership with home contributes significantly to the pupils' learning and development. Everyone is accepted into the family that is St Mary's Catholic Primary School. The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination very effectively. Pupils and their circumstances are well known, so that highly effective action taken if there is the remotest sign of possible underachievement. As a result, any gaps in achievement, such as for more-able boys in writing, are closing rapidly.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



8 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Uxbridge UB8 2UA

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently and to the Year 6 pupils who showed us around. Thank you also for sharing your views with us. We were impressed with how hard you work and your pride in the part you play in school life. We were particularly impressed by your clear and confident answers to our questions. We found that St Mary's is an outstanding school because of the tireless efforts of the headteacher, staff and governing body to improve further. These are the things we liked most.

- We agree with you that you are taught very well. Teachers make lessons interesting and help you to make excellent progress.
- Members of staff take excellent care of you and teach you how to keep yourselves safe and deal with any risks you might face.
- Your exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and exemplary behaviour contribute significantly to your outstanding progress.
- The curriculum provides very many enjoyable experiences for you, including many clubs and events such as 'One World' week.
- Those of you who find learning difficult, or are new to speaking English are given excellent support, so that you make the same rapid progress as others in your classes.
- Teaching is good and, in most lessons, effective use is made of assessment data to support your learning and progress.

We have asked the school to ensure that more opportunities are provided to enable you to develop the confidence in mathematics to undertake investigations and not be afraid to learn by your mistakes. You can play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to work hard. Well done for showing such pride in your school and in your achievements.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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