

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112338
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	395539
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Gillian Salter-Smith

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	143
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Michael Rooney
<b>Headteacher</b>	Catherine Pearson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 June 2009
<b>School address</b>	Holden Road Salterbeck Workington CA14 5LN
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Gillian Salter-Smith

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Six teachers were observed teaching in nine lessons; teaching assistants were observed supporting learning in these lessons. Meetings were held with a group of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised work in pupils' books. Documents looked at included the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan and action planning, information on pupils' progress, policies and records relating to safeguarding and the most recent report of the local authority general advisor. The inspector analysed 75 questionnaires received from parents and carers and those received from pupils and staff.

## Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average sized primary school. All pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.

The school meets the current floor standards which set the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

A pre-school known as 'Jack and Jill at St Mary's' operates from the school site and is subject to a separate Ofsted 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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>1</b>

## Key Findings

- This is an outstanding school. Pupils are very happy and secure because staff provide excellent care within a highly supportive family-type ethos based on strong moral values. Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school's work. Pupils make rapid and sustained progress because excellent teaching inspires and motivates them and the outstanding curriculum provides many memorable experiences. There is no complacency and leaders are keen to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by finding even more ways to share best practice across the school and to improve access to exciting outdoor areas for the youngest children.
- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. From low starting points in the Reception class, pupils reach above average attainment by Year 6. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are exceptionally well nurtured and make outstanding progress.
- The outstanding teaching and curriculum ensure that pupils are keen, independent learners with strong basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. Consequently, pupils are very well prepared for secondary education. Children in the Reception Year make excellent progress in a highly stimulating environment; indoor and outdoor learning is very carefully planned but the most exciting part of the school grounds is not easily accessible.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils enjoy lessons and apply themselves diligently to tasks. They work particularly well in pairs and enjoy discussing their work. Pupils feel very safe and secure in school. They are highly sensitive to the needs of others and respect one another. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Leaders and the governing body are relentless in their pursuit of excellence. Highly rigorous monitoring of pupils' performance and teaching informs priorities for improvement. Professional development is closely targeted to the school's priorities and individual staff needs. As a result, high quality teaching and achievement have been maintained since the previous inspection.

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

- Share the best practice in teaching even more extensively in order to increase further the proportion of outstanding teaching.
- Find ways to increase access to the most exciting parts of the school grounds for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Pupils enjoy learning and are exceptionally well motivated. They develop into independent learners who rise to the challenge of difficult tasks. In a Year 5 and 6 challenging mathematics lesson, pupils worked very well together using practical resources to solve tricky sequencing problems. Pupils gain a wide range of skills quickly and use them effectively in subjects across the curriculum. Science reports are very well structured and draw on mathematical skills. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are used extensively for research and analysis.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Attainment by Year 6 is above average and, apart from in 2011 when there was a temporary dip related to the nature of the cohort, has been above average since the previous inspection. In the current Year 6, a high proportion of pupils have been assessed by the school as reaching above expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Taking into account their low starting points at the beginning of the Reception Year, particularly in communication, language and literacy skills, this is impressive progress.

Outstanding progress is sustained across all key stages. By the end of the Reception Year children have made excellent progress although their attainment on entry to Year 1 remains below the national average. By the end of Year 2, attainment is broadly average and improving, including in reading. Currently, Year 2 pupils' attainment in writing is strongly above average. The quantity and quality of writing in pupils' workbooks across the school is outstanding and shows rapid improvement from the beginning of the academic year. Pupils take care to present their written work carefully and handwriting is mostly neat and well formed.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make excellent progress because staff identify their needs quickly and provide precisely targeted support alongside other pupils. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make better progress than all pupils nationally. There are no significant differences between the attainment of girls and boys. Where there have been gaps these have been closed. Parents and carers rightly consider that learning and progress are at least good.

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## Quality of teaching

The impact of teaching over time is outstanding and results in almost all pupils making exceptional progress. Pupils really appreciate the help they get from teachers. They say teachers are friendly, make lessons really fun and are always helping them to do their very best. They say the work is often hard but they get the help they need to do well.

Relationships between staff and pupils are highly supportive so pupils feel secure and ready to learn. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and set challenging tasks that are matched exceptionally well to different needs. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs benefit from support from teachers and teaching assistants in class that is closely guided by very careful planning.

Much thought is given to planning interesting activities that fuel pupils' imaginations. Lessons are most often fast moving and totally capture pupils' interest. For example, in a Year 2 and 3 class, pupils responded very positively to role play; in a lesson on the Tudors they enthusiastically took on their roles in a very strict 'Tudor classroom' and as a result they used a rich range of language and sentence structures to describe their experiences. In the Reception and Year 1 class, children and pupils happily plan their own activities within a vitally stimulating environment. In response to adult's astute questioning, Reception-age children developed their understanding of why ice-cream might melt and change as they enjoyed preparing ice-cream sundaes as part of sessions planned to encourage the writing of instructions. Learning and play for Reception-aged children are very well planned both indoors and outdoors. However, access to the most exciting part of the school grounds is not easy on a day-to-day basis.

The teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT is highly effective both through discrete lessons and through topics that pupils find fascinating and that cover subjects across the curriculum. The extremely well-planned programme of teaching pupils how to recognise letters and the sounds they make provides a secure basis for early reading. Pupils develop a love of reading and high quality writing because of the range of powerful texts that teachers select as the basis of much of the literacy work. Well-planned guided reading sessions, comfortable and stimulating 'corners' in each classroom and a wide range of exciting books encourage pupils to read on a regular basis. The strong emphasis on pupils' talking about their exciting curriculum experiences and drama-type activities supports rapid and sustained progress in their writing.

Based on accurate on-going assessment, the staff guide pupils' learning and plan effectively to meet needs and fill gaps in learning. Where pupils are identified as in danger of falling behind, through regular formal reviews of progress, staff are very swift to provide highly effective additional support to help pupils catch up. Pupils all have individual targets and most pupils say these guide their learning and help them to know what to improve. Marking gives very useful praise and guidance in relation to the success criteria planned for each lesson although it is not always clear how pupils respond to their teachers' comments. Pupils often reflect on their own and each other's learning and this helps them to focus on what they need to do to improve. Parents' and carers' positive views of teaching are accurate.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is typically outstanding both in lessons and around the school. Pupils are especially keen to learn. They enjoy working collaboratively and supporting each other's

learning. Parents and carers and pupils consider behaviour is at least good. At lunchtimes pupils play very constructively using a rich variety of equipment. Older pupils delight in supporting younger pupils.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in many situations both in and outside school, including in relation to using ICT. They know about different types of bullying such as name-calling and cyber-bullying. They say that incidents of bullying are extremely rare and they know what to do if it happens. They are fully confident that adults will deal with it very quickly. Parents and carers are happy that their children are kept very safe. The school council is highly active in making substantial improvements to playtime activities. Attendance is average and improving as a result of the rigorous attention paid to contacting the families of absent pupils quickly and encouraging good attendance. The overall rate is lowered by a small number of pupils with severe medical difficulties.

### **Leadership and management**

Staff work very strongly as a team with clear common values and aims successfully focused on providing a safe and secure environment in which every child thrives and achieves their best. Equality of opportunity for every child is exceptionally strong with very close attention given to the achievement of individuals. Senior leaders set high expectations of staff, pupils and themselves and hold staff closely to account for every pupil's progress. Leaders know the school's strengths and areas to develop exceptionally well because pupils' performance and the teaching are monitored with great rigour. Leaders are highly ambitious and keen to increase further the proportion of teaching that is outstanding and extend the means by which staff share best practice. Professional development is exceptionally well planned and closely linked to the school's priorities and individual staff needs. As a result, pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and the curriculum continue to improve; the focus on improving writing and reading across the school continues to be highly successful and outstanding achievement and teaching have been maintained since the previous inspection. The capacity to improve further is securely demonstrated.

The governing body is highly supportive and takes an active part in monitoring the school's work. It holds leaders closely to account for the school's performance. Members of the governing body take time to consult pupils, staff, parents and carers regularly. They have been instrumental in making significant improvements to the school site so that it is a safe, warm, welcoming environment conducive to learning. They ensure that arrangements for safeguarding pupils and staff are stringently in place. Checks on the suitability of staff are robust; staff are fully briefed on child protection policies and arrangements.

The curriculum is exceptionally well planned. It successfully meets pupils' needs, captures their interests and imagination and promotes their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Pupils learn to be tolerant and respectful of others whatever their backgrounds and circumstances, and discrimination is not tolerated. The curriculum promotes key skills through discrete lessons and links to other subjects highly successfully, as was seen in an impressive day's activities based on the Ancient Greeks for Years 4 and 5 pupils.

## 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](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.

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.**



31 May 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Workington, CA14 5LN**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me when I visited your school. A special thank you goes to those of you who talked to me about your experiences in school.

I am pleased to report that St Mary's is an outstanding school. You are right to be very proud of your school. You are extremely well taught and you enjoy many fascinating activities that help you to learn a great deal. Consequently, your achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is outstanding. I was pleased to see how you played happily out on the field and that older pupils were very good about looking after younger pupils and clearing away the equipment. Your behaviour is exemplary and it is good to hear that you enjoy school and learning so much. It was very heartening to see how totally engrossed pupils in Years 4 and 5 were in their activities about Ancient Greece. Your robes looked splendid and the food you made was really tasty and quite different! Thank you.

Your headteacher, senior staff and the governing body are always looking for ways to improve your school and help you to enjoy school and do your best. They have agreed with me that they will:

- find even more ways for teachers to share their ideas about what works best to help you to learn, so that even more lessons are really exciting and challenging
- look for ways that the most exciting part of the school grounds can be used more often by the youngest, children especially to help them become even more adventurous when they are playing and working outdoors.

You can play your part by keeping up your attendance, and carrying on trying your very best at all times. Enjoy everything that your wonderful school can offer you. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely  
Gillian Salter-Smith  
Lead inspector

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