

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110028
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	378037
Inspection dates	9–10 July 2012
Lead inspector	Akwai Gill

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	293
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin McNamee
Headteacher	Janice Laycock
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2006
School address	Cookham Road Maidenhead SL6 7EG
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Age group	5–11
Inspection date(s)	9–10 July 2012
Inspection number	378037



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Introduction

Inspection team

Akwai Gill

Additional inspector

David Curtis

Additional inspector

Maura Docherty

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 21 lessons and activities led by 11 teachers and three teaching assistants. Meetings were held with staff, pupils and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors took account of assemblies, made short observations of sessions on the teaching of phonics, listened to pupils reading and observed the school's work. They looked at documentation relating to safeguarding and child protection, the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, the governing body minutes and data relating to pupils' performance. They looked at the 68 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, together with those completed by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

St Mary's is a slightly larger than average primary school. There are two single-age classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In Key Stage 1, there are three mixed-age Year 1/2 classes. In Key Stage 2, there are three Year 3/4 classes and three Year 5/6 classes. In English and mathematics, pupils are taught in sets (ability groups). The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is above average, as is the proportion speaking English as an additional language. Both figures have increased since the last inspection. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The school has received an eco-schools award.

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

The privately managed pre-school which is on the school site was not part of 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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school where pupils achieve well because of good teaching. The majority of parents and carers have very positive views of the education that the school provides for their children. The school is not yet outstanding because the quality of teaching is not yet of consistently high quality. While there have been notable improvements since the last inspection, especially in mathematics, pupils' writing skills are not as good as those in reading.
- Pupils' achievement is good because they make good progress from starting points that are below expectations for four-year-olds. Progress in reading is outstanding and standards are consistently above average. In mathematics and writing, progress is good and standards are broadly average and improving in mathematics.
- Teaching is good over time and is a key factor in the upward trend in pupils' attainment in mathematics. Groups of pupils are taught particularly well within lessons. However, the inconsistent use of targets and opportunities for all pupils to respond to marking hinders the progress pupils make in writing. Teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, especially in writing.
- Responses from parental and pupil questionnaires confirm the inspection findings that the good behaviour seen in lessons and around the school is typical. Pupils enjoy being in school and display positive attitudes to learning. Pupils feel safe in school and their attendance is high.
- The senior leaders are very well supported by the experienced and knowledgeable members of the governing body who challenge leaders to maintain the drive for improvement. The school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Strengths in the management of teaching and of performance contribute successfully to improving achievement

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in mathematics, especially for girls, and the better quality of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing to above average at the end of Key Stage 2 by:
 - ensuring that expectations of pupils are consistently high and that activities are suitably challenging
 - ensuring pupils know their targets and that they are used consistently in all classes
 - improving the consistency of teachers' marking, ensuring pupils understand exactly what they need to do to improve their work and that they have time to act on teachers' comments.
- Improving the progress in writing for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs through careful and consistent deployment of teaching assistants, especially at the start and end of lessons.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and, by the time they start Year 1, standards are average in all six areas of learning. This represents a significant improvement over previous years where standards were consistently below average. Children make good progress in learning their basic letters and sounds (known as phonics), and their early number skills through a good range of imaginative activities. For example, they really enjoyed learning letter sounds in the context of a pirate adventure story, where the teacher had used props, telescopes made out of junk model materials, visuals and small furry animals to bring the story to life.

In Key Stage 1, most pupils make good progress from their starting points. They are enthusiastic learners and usually respond well to their teachers. Pupils make outstanding progress in reading, and learn to segment words and blend sounds effectively, especially when working in small groups. They have good opportunities to practise their skills and to use them in their emerging writing. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average at the end of Year 2. Pupils' progress is less marked in some lessons in Key Stage 1 when they are not challenged sufficiently to extend their writing skills. In Key Stage 2, progress in reading is

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outstanding, and good in writing and mathematics. Pupils are extremely responsive to their teachers' high expectations and the challenges they are set. Their skills in mathematics, in particular, have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils show much greater confidence in using and applying their key skills in problem-solving activities. The gap where boys outperformed girls in mathematics is closing rapidly. At the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is broadly average in writing and mathematics, and above average in reading.

Pupils enjoy learning and teachers plan work that they find motivating. This has encouraged pupils' growing levels of confidence and independence, and they want to be involved in assessing and evaluating their own work whenever they get the opportunity. This is more evident in their mathematics books than in their writing books. In many lessons, there were examples of good cooperative working, for example in a Year 5 lesson, where pupils had to identify the viewpoint of the author and his style of writing of the poem '*The Tyger*' in paired discussion.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in reading and mathematics because of the effective guidance they receive and satisfactory progress in writing. The achievement of pupils from minority ethnic heritages, and those who speak English as an additional language, is good because their needs are catered for well through good teaching and additional help both within the class and in intervention groups.

The majority of the parents and carers who completed the questionnaire feel that their children make good progress and that the school helps them to support their child's learning. Inspection evidence supports their views.

Quality of teaching

Strengths in teaching enable pupils to make good progress over time. This supports the view of the vast majority of parents and carers that their children are well taught. One parent or carer commented, 'I am very impressed with the school, all the staff are very committed.' Teachers have high expectations of all the pupils and most plan effectively to meet their wide-ranging needs. In almost every lesson observed, pupils were clear about the learning objective and the steps in learning. However, teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively at the start and end of lessons, and this contributes to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs making slower progress in writing. Teaching assistants are not sufficiently engaged in helping these pupils learn and apply new skills taught in lessons.

Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and has a strong impact on the much improved outcomes for children. Adults provide a good range of opportunities, both inside and outside, to develop children's independence and acquisition of basic skills in communication, language and literacy, and problem solving, reasoning and numeracy. The teaching of letters and sounds is particularly effective and is the basis

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for the outstanding progress made in reading in Years 1 to 6.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers foster good relationships with their pupils and manage their classes well. Pupils say how much they enjoy their learning and how teachers 'make learning fun'. This was evident in many lessons where teachers made good use of information and communication technology, especially interactive whiteboards, and other strategies to engage and motivate pupils. The curriculum is very effective in developing a range of key skills which enable most pupils to make good progress.

Teaching was particularly effective in mathematics across the school because there was a clear school focus on improving the progress of pupils, especially girls in mathematics. A good emphasis is placed on the regular practise of basic number skills, through the practical application of abstract ideas. For example, in a Year 6 lesson on data handling, this approach enabled pupils of all abilities to improve their understanding of the interpretation of data and ways of testing a hypothesis. In writing, pupils' progress is not as rapid as it is in reading, mainly because teachers' marking does not tell pupils how to improve their work and insufficient links are made to pupils' individual writing targets. There is an overemphasis on telling pupils how well they are doing, especially through praise.

Teaching promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development extremely well and the curriculum enhances pupils' learning and progress. Pupils take pride in all their work and are well motivated because they find the subject matter interesting and often fun. The school makes good use of visits and visitors to enhance the pupils' learning, and pupils spoke enthusiastically about some trips out of school and could relate them to what they had learned. Many visits have enabled the pupils to have a very good awareness of other cultures.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are polite, courteous and very welcoming. The way they behave in lessons and around school is very good. In many lessons, particularly in Key Stage 2, attitudes to learning were very good. Occasionally, in Key Stage 1, when tasks did not fully engage them or when they were asked to sit for too long without active involvement, pupils became restless and lost focus. Almost all parents and carers indicated in their questionnaires that the standard of behaviour is good, and bullying was handled effectively and disruption in lessons was minimal. Inspection findings confirm this view. Behaviour and safety are good because the pupils are highly motivated, are very engaged in their learning and expectations are high. Inspectors talked to different groups of pupils who confirmed that there are very occasional interruptions to lessons but that these are dealt with well by staff. Pupils are very clear about the school's systems of rewards and sanctions, and generally respond well to them.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of the different types of bullying. Evidence

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from pupils' questionnaires indicates that all pupils agree that the school deals with all types of bullying extremely well, and say that bullying in any form is a rare event. The Year 6 'Buddies' act as excellent role models for younger pupils at the school. There have been no exclusions for many years and pupils confirm that behaviour is typically good over time. All parents and carers say that their children feel safe in school. This is confirmed by the pupils themselves. Pupils say that racist incidents are uncommon, and this is confirmed in school records. Attendance is high, and pupils are punctual at the start of the day and to their lessons.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, make a very strong leadership team with a clear vision and a successful track record of improvement in the school. They have developed considerably the capacity of leaders at all levels to drive improvement. Leaders communicate high expectations and galvanise the enthusiasm of staff. Teaching is improving because of a rigorous programme of monitoring linked to performance management and professional development, which includes systematic analysis of pupils' progress. Pupils' achievement is improving, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in mathematics in Years 1 to 6. Gaps for potentially vulnerable groups have narrowed, especially that of girls in mathematics. The outstanding progress and high standards in reading have been sustained since the last inspection.

Leaders have identified correctly that the quality of the teaching of writing is variable and have planned specific actions in this area. The senior team is well supported by the very strong governing body, which is led well by the experienced and knowledgeable Chair and Vice-Chair. It has a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement because of its active involvement and the rigour of the challenge it presents to the school. Areas for improvement from the last inspection have been tackled successfully and are now clear strengths of the school, particularly challenge for the more-able pupils in Key Stage 1 in mathematics lessons. The school's self-evaluation is clearly focused on the correct priorities and stems from an effective programme of monitoring and evaluation. Consequently, the school has the capacity for further improvement.

The curriculum, enriched by a range of visits to places of interest and visitors to the school, contributes positively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It provides memorable experiences for the pupils. For example, in a Year 1/2 class, pupils were sharing facts about the Olympic torch, through the use of a prop. Pupils were extremely cautious when they held the torch and passed it on to the next pair. Assemblies bring pupils together in celebration, taking pride in social and academic achievement. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated and the school ensures all pupils have equality of opportunity, especially as gaps in the progress of groups are closing rapidly. Safeguarding procedures comply with statutory requirements and the school is conscientious in ensuring staff and visitors are vetted

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before working in the school.

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.

10 July 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Maidenhead SL6 7EG

Thank you for talking to us and showing us your work when we visited your school. We were pleased to hear your views, directly and from your responses in the questionnaires, that the large majority of you like school, especially working on topics like the Olympics. After having a close look at many different things that go on in your school, including coming to your lessons, we have judged that yours is a good school.

The adults in your school work hard to keep you safe, happy and well cared for. You told us you enjoy reading and that you have some opportunities to read in school, so keep it up! You are keen to learn and your behaviour is good at all times. We were very impressed with your behaviour when you returned to school after watching the Olympic torch. While you were excited, you were all well behaved at all times. This helps to make sure that you do not waste time in lessons.

Teaching in your school is good. We know the staff and senior leaders want to make your school even better, and we have asked them to:

- plan more opportunities for you to practise writing so that you reach higher levels when you leave school
- make sure all adults work together to help you learn, including at the start and end of lessons
- ensure all of you use your targets in the same way to help your learning
- make sure when teachers mark your work they let you know what you need to do next to improve and you have time to respond to the comments that they make in your books.

You can all help by continuing to work hard, making sure that you keep up your high attendance to school and always using the advice teachers give you on how to improve your work.

Thank you again for helping us with our work.

Yours sincerely

Akwai Gill
Lead inspector

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