

St Mary's Catholic Nursery and Infants' Schools

West Street, Carshalton, SM5 2PT

Inspection dates

26–27 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This is a caring school which is popular with parents, pupils and staff alike.
- Pupils feel safe and happy. They enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. This is reflected in their high attendance.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural qualities are developed very well, and this is reflected in their good behaviour.
- Pupils achieve well during their time at the school. Attainment is well above average. Pupils throughout the school make strong progress in their learning. This reflects the good quality of teaching over time.
- Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes because of the caring adults and inviting activities.
- Teaching over time is good, enabling all groups to make similar progress, so that no group falls behind.
- Reading is a strength of the school. Parents make a valuable contribution to listening to their children read. Year 1 pupils did particularly well in the 2013 survey of how well they know their sounds and letters (phonics).
- The interim headteacher, ably assisted by her deputy, has made an impressive start in a short space of time. She has set up effective systems to check pupils' progress. She has already observed all teachers at least twice, and made recommendations for improvement where they are needed.
- Leaders are honest and open in their self-evaluation, and understand the school's strengths and areas for development. They are ambitious for its future, and the school is now well placed to improve.
- Governors have a clear vision for future improvements and are highly effective in supporting school leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Very occasionally the pace of learning is too slow and time is wasted. Sometimes teachers do too much that pupils could do for themselves.
- Teachers do not always introduce pupils to enough new and exciting topics to stimulate their curiosity and wonder about the world.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons across a range of subjects, most observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, looked at samples of their work and discussed their learning with them.
- Meetings were held with leaders and managers, pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors took account of the views of staff in 19 questionnaires.
- There were 67 responses to Parent View, the online survey of parents and carers. Inspectors considered these, and also spoke to a number of parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including information on pupils' attainment and progress, safeguarding information, records relating to behaviour and safety, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Natalia Power, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Fatiha Maitland

Additional inspector

Martin Marsh

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary's is a little larger in size than the average primary school.
- Around one pupil in 20 is known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides schools with additional funding for children looked after by the local authority, for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and for those with a parent in the armed services. This proportion is much lower than the national average. At St Mary's, nearly all of the pupils who qualify for the pupil premium do so through eligibility for free school meals.
- Around two out of five pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages, and this proportion is higher than usual. However, the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much lower than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is lower than average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The interim headteacher and the deputy headteacher took up their posts in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To improve pupils' learning and progress in lessons, teachers should:
 - give pupils as many chances as possible to explore and find things out for themselves
 - make sure that lessons move at a brisk pace and that as little time is wasted as possible.
- Pupils should be given plenty of exciting and stimulating topics to explore, so that they find out as much as possible about the world around them.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress from their starting points, and no group falls behind. This shows how pupils benefit from the school's commitment to equality for all. They leave school with results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 2 which are typically well above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes, arriving with skills and aptitudes which vary but are typically above the levels expected for their age. As a result of the good care and close attention they receive from all the adults, they make good progress in their learning.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 continue to receive good teaching overall, and make good progress.
- Pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages, and those who speak English as an additional language, make similar progress to others because their needs are identified early and effective support put in place.
- The school is responsive in putting in place additional support for disabled pupils and those with a range of special educational needs, both within the classroom and in small withdrawal groups. As a result, these pupils make similar progress to others.
- Pupils do well in reading because the school works in close partnership with parents and carers to foster a love of reading. Parents read daily with their children and this cooperation between school and home makes a valuable contribution to their progress. Children in the Reception classes are able to piece words together, using their knowledge of phonics (sounds and letters), and by Year 2, pupils consistently do very well in their national tests.
- The school has a positive effect on the learning of the small proportion of pupils eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium. School leaders and governors check the progress of these pupils and keep a close eye on how effectively the additional support for them is used. As a result, they make similar progress to all others in the school in reading, writing and mathematics, and there is no appreciable gap between how they are doing and others in the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good overall, and a scrutiny of pupils' work confirms that they make good progress in their learning. Inspectors saw examples of outstanding teaching but there was some teaching where pupils' learning slowed a little.
- Teachers expect a good deal from the pupils, and they respond by doing their best work. Questioning is usually brisk, and this keeps pupils alert and interested.
- The best teaching is varied and stimulating. In one fast-paced Year 2 mathematics lesson, for example, the pupils were challenged to do harder and harder work, and responded enthusiastically. The teacher maintained variety and pace by interweaving French words and phrases to keep them on their toes.
- Occasionally, teachers tell pupils too much, which lessens the opportunities pupils have to find things out for themselves. Sometimes, pupils are kept too long listening to the teacher and, as a result, the pace of learning slows.
- The quality of teaching and activities in the Nursery and Reception classes is generally strong and the children enjoy learning. In one Reception class, for example, the teacher had prepared a sand tray with logs and realistic-looking lizards and reptiles, and this stimulated a discussion about which animals live underground. This developed the children's language and thinking skills very well.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of pupils, particularly those who have a range of additional needs, helping them individually and in small groups. This enables

pupils who are learning English, and those who struggle with their work, to make similar progress to others.

- Marking is consistently thorough and provides pupils with clear advice on how they can improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils generally behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and welcoming to visitors. They respond well to adults and are considerate to one another. Occasionally, when lessons move too slowly or when they are kept sitting for too long listening to the teacher, pupils become a little restless.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and told inspectors that they enjoy coming to school and like their teachers.
- In the playground, pupils are ready to take turns and they are well supervised. There are clear rules for behaviour, such as walking, not running, in school which ensure pupils stay safe.
- The children in the Reception classes have an attractive outdoor play area, although there is limited space for them to ride their tricycles. The headteacher has already drawn up plans to extend their playground to accommodate all 90 children in the Reception classes.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well and, as a result, pupils respect one another's heritages and get on well together. The school is inclusive and school leaders ensure that there is no discrimination. The school promotes a strong community ethos and, as a result of close links with a nearby Catholic junior school, pupils and parents know one another well, which results in pupils feeling secure.
- Children have a settled and secure start in the Nursery because of effective communication between school and home and because of the care they receive from all the adults.
- Pupils feel safe at the school and understand how to keep themselves safe. They told inspectors that there was no bullying at the school, such as racist or cyber-bullying, but that some pupils could be unkind to one another. However, they know who to turn to if they have any worries and are confident that these will be quickly dealt with.
- All parents who responded to the online survey of their views or who spoke to inspectors agreed that their children are safe and well looked after at the school.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good because, over time, school leaders have worked effectively with governors, ensuring that teachers teach well and pupils achieve well. The school is happy and harmonious. Staff responses to the questionnaire were almost completely positive.
- Parents told inspectors of good communications between school and home. They feel well informed and several described the school as a close-knit community. The partnership between school and home makes a valuable contribution to pupils' good learning.
- The headteacher understands that, while the school was judged to be outstanding over six years ago, expectations for ensuring the highest quality education have risen. Within a short time she has identified essential ways in which she wants the school to improve, and has wasted no time in putting these plans into action.
- Aably assisted by her deputy, she has set up new systems for checking and recording pupils' progress, so that these are clear and easily understood by teachers. She has been active in seeing for herself the quality of teaching, and her evaluations are accurate and have an excellent focus on how and what pupils are learning.
- In assessing the quality of the teaching, the headteacher has been ably supported by the local authority, which is giving the school considerable assistance in their journey of improvement. These improvements show that the school is well placed to improve.

- The school keeps pupils safe and ensures that those who work with them have been properly checked.
- The curriculum has a good focus on reading, writing, handwriting and mathematics, and this prepares pupils well for the next stage of schooling.
- Some pupils are given interesting topics to learn about, such as those in Year 2 who are currently finding out about life in India. However, this is not the case for all pupils, and the range of topics covered at present is rather limited.
- Pupils have the opportunity to sample a range of physical activities, including dance, and this has a good impact on their physical well-being and gives boys and girls the chance to participate in sports, games and dancing on equal terms.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a strong vision for the future of the school and are ambitious for its success. As a result of their energy and commitment, they have led the school successfully through recent changes of leadership, setting it on an upward path.
 - Governors play an active part in the life of the school and know its strengths and areas for development. Governors visit lessons to assure themselves of the quality of the teaching. They are well informed about how well the school performs in comparison to other schools.
 - Governors have a clear understanding of the link between teachers' pay and the progress that pupils are making, and this ensures good value for money.
 - Governors keep a firm hand on the school's budget. They carefully check the uses to which pupil premium funding is put, making sure that it benefits those for whom it is intended. They make good use of the additional primary sports funding, for example by encouraging dance.
 - Governors are well trained and effectively carry out their statutory duties, including safeguarding and ensuring equality of opportunities.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	102995
Local authority	Sutton
Inspection number	427201

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	288
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bernard Tomkins
Headteacher	Christine Smith, interim headteacher
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2007
Telephone number	020 8647 5711
Fax number	020 8773 2582
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