



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101662
LEA Bromley LEA
Inspection number 276567
Inspection dates 12 September 2005 to 13 September 2005
Reporting inspector Andrew Howe AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Westgate Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Beckenham
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		BR3 5DE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8650 2355
Number on roll	432	Fax number	020 8663 4845
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Canon Jack Madden
Date of previous inspection	11 September 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Isobel Vassallo

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St. Mary's is a large Catholic primary school for children aged 4 - 11 in an area of largely privately owned housing in south east London. Nearly all the pupils live in the local community and come from three neighbouring parishes. All of the intake come from Catholic families. It is a popular and oversubscribed school, having expanded from a one to a two form of entry. It is perceived in the community as having high standards. A very low proportion of pupils have free school meals and the number with learning difficulties and disabilities is also below average, although eight pupils have statements of special educational needs. Three quarters of the pupils are from a white British background, with a range of other backgrounds making up the remainder. The headteacher has been in post since April 2005.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school judges itself to be effective. Inspectors agree that this is a good school with a number of outstanding strengths. The vigorous and committed leadership of the new headteacher has started a purposeful drive to make teaching and curriculum better and to involve everyone more fully in the life of the school. She has been successful in gaining the confidence of staff, governors and parents in order to bring about vital improvement. Her leadership is informed by rigorous and accurate evaluation of the school's work. The school provides high quality care and guidance, so that pupils are safe, behave very well and feel a part of a very strong and special Catholic community. Provision for spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Pupils achieve high standards by the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with special educational needs make excellent progress because of the careful planning and support which the school provides. Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress and do well in their personal and social development. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They play a full part in the school's decision making process through the school council. They appreciate the many clubs and other enriching activities which the school offers. They are encouraged strongly to adopt a healthy lifestyle and they respond to this. The quality of teaching is good. As a result pupils achieve well. Teachers form good relationships with pupils, plan carefully, ask questions skilfully and use teaching assistants effectively. Teaching is better for the older pupils than the younger. In Years 1 - 3 there is some good teaching but occasionally expectations are not high enough for the more able pupils. The use of assessment and tracking systems to help teachers set challenging targets has been revised and there has been some improvement in standards at the end of Year 2. The school has taken effective steps to improve the issues identified at the last inspection. It provides good value for money. The school is well placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

* use the new progress tracking system to set suitably challenging targets for pupils, particularly the most able* provide more opportunities within the curriculum to prepare pupils fully for life in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Taken overall inspectors agree with the school's judgement that pupils achieve well, especially in the classes with the older pupils. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage, and their personal and social development is good. By the end of Year 2 they have made good progress in reading and satisfactory progress in writing and mathematics, but some of the more able pupils could do better. This is because the expectations of what pupils can achieve are not as high enough as they could be. Overall, standards are above average at this point and the 2005 test results have improved. During Key Stage 2 pupils achieve well, reaching very good standards in

English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. The school sets challenging targets for this age group, which are met effectively. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make outstanding progress, often reaching national standards by the time they finish school. This is because of the high level of support provided by all staff and the very good systems for identifying and planning for their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The Christian ethos of this Catholic school is pervasive, although the recognition that other cultures and traditions need to be studied is relatively new. Pupils have very positive attitudes and behaviour. Attendance is excellent. Pupils enjoy their learning. They take a pride in their work. 'I like literacy; my writing is neat!' commented one girl in Year 2. Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and safe practices. The 'walking bus' is an example of how they are being encouraged to look after themselves and the environment better. Pupils are involved in the wider community and with their parents, are very actively involved in the local Catholic parishes. They take part in very successful fund-raising events for charity and have many opportunities to participate in school life. The self-esteem of many is enhanced by their involvement in public speaking, for example. They acquire the basic skills that will be needed in their life after they move on from St Mary's and in the workplace.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school judges that the quality of teaching is good. Inspectors' visits to lessons confirm that teaching is good in most parts of the school. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils who come to lessons ready and willing to learn. Teachers plan their lessons well so that pupils are able to make good progress. Teaching assistants work very effectively with pupils who have special educational needs and these pupils make outstanding progress. Sometimes the more able pupils are not pushed enough to achieve the highest levels particularly in Years 1, 2 and 3. Teachers have good subject knowledge and where lessons are exciting and lively pupils react very positively. As a result pupils behave well and make good progress. For instance, they enjoy brief drama activities within lessons and benefit from short paired discussion activities. 'When you can talk about your work, it helps you learn better' said one boy in Year 5. Pupils' books are regularly marked. The school is beginning to refine assessment procedures to help pupils understand better how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced, but is not yet applied in a particularly imaginative way. This is recognised correctly by the school leadership who have identified several ways in which changes can be made. The focus is beginning to shift towards developing pupils' skills, and ensuring that they learn more actively, for example by using drama and role play in more lessons. The curriculum makes a strong contribution to showing pupils how to stay safe and healthy. It also makes a satisfactory contribution to helping pupils learn about our multi-racial society but activities are not always planned as part of the curriculum. The needs of the more able pupils are not always identified consistently and this means that in Years 1, 2 and 3 some could achieve even more. The curriculum is enriched by an excellent programme of out-of-class activities, school visits and the relevant use of, for example, visiting authors and theatre groups. Parents make a very significant contribution to the curriculum, both in and outside lessons in areas such as reading.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care provided by the school for its pupils is outstanding. All adults in the school show a high level of commitment and competence in promoting the health and safety of the children. All requirements for child protection are fully in place and teachers are very alert to any symptoms of distress. The school has recently reviewed and improved its anti-bullying policy, involving parents and pupils very effectively, to ensure all pupils feel safe. Every child is known and treated as an individual and this contributes strongly to the calm and harmonious atmosphere. The school works well with parents and other agencies to ensure that pupils make good progress. 'It is a very welcoming school, with a good community spirit,' commented one parent we talked to. All learners, including those most at risk, are well supported.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's leadership is outstanding. It is characterised by a clear understanding of how to make the school better and a commitment to improving teaching and the curriculum. Overall leadership and management are good. This is why pupils achieve well by the end of Year 6. The headteacher has grasped the key issues facing the school very rapidly and accurately, undertaking very useful parent and pupil surveys very soon after taking up her post. Parents describe her approach as 'open.' She has engaged the staff very effectively in school improvement and has high expectations for the school, both in terms of the standards that children achieve and the quality of care that the school offers. There is an appropriately focused school improvement plan, devised by staff and governors, which forms the basis for ongoing development. Governors have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, gained through frequent visits, observation of lessons and very active committee work.

They are very involved in the life of the school and committed to its success. In making the bold decision to re-organise the school's management structure, and in their management of the school's financial situation, they have shown a concern to improve the quality of education. The re-structured leadership team is a supportive and capable group that is well placed to move the school on. The two key stage co-ordinators demonstrate effective leadership and have a good track record in raising standards and, developing special needs provision and mathematics in the school. Teaching is monitored thoroughly and frequently. There has been an effective programme of professional development based upon performance management which has improved the quality of teaching. The recent introduction of a more effective system to track the performance of pupils and set them challenging targets is well founded. The school's management has an outstanding capacity to improve. The changes brought about have already had some impact on the standards achieved in Year 2 last term.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your help during the inspection. We really enjoyed finding out about your school. Everyone was very friendly and made it easy for us to do our job.

We think your school is good. Here are some of the things it does well:* By the end of Year 6 many children reach high standards in their end of year tests* All the adults in the school take excellent care of you. They keep you safe and teach you how to be healthy. You all work together very well. This is partly because you all believe in the same things* You enjoy coming to school* Teachers plan good lessons that help you do well* There are a lot of good things to do outside of lessons. I enjoyed watching your chess club!* You have an excellent headteacher who knows what the school needs to do to get even better. She is interested in what you and your parents think about the school

We think there are some things that the school needs to do better:* Teach you all some more about different people from different places and their ways of life* Make sure teachers know as much as they can about how well you are doing, so they can help you see how to make your work better.