



# St Mary's The Mount Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 104232  
**LEA** Walsall  
**Inspection number** 277108  
**Inspection dates** 22 February 2006 to 23 February 2006  
**Reporting inspector** David Carrington AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Jesson Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Walsall
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		West Midlands WS1 3AY
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01922 720711
<b>Number on roll</b>	238	<b>Fax number</b>	01922 622052
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	The Very Rev Canon Peter Taylor
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	20 November 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Catherine Amos

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 22 February 2006 - 23 February 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 277108
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

St Mary of the Mount is an average-sized primary school. A smaller number of pupils than is usually found have learning difficulties and disabilities. Very few pupils are entitled to free school meals. The majority of pupils speak English as their first language. When children start in the Nursery they have broadly average skills and knowledge, although a significant number start at a lower level.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Mary of the Mount is a good school that enables its pupils to do well. This matches the school's own view of its effectiveness. There are several outstanding features, not least in the development of the pupils as mature, sensible and well-behaved learners who enjoy their work. The school's partnership with parents, the community and outside agencies is particularly successful. There is a very strong Catholic tradition which is the bedrock of the school's many successful efforts to ensure the pupils work and play harmoniously together.

Expectations are high. This ensures that standards are above average and rising and that pupils make good progress from their beginnings in Nursery and Reception through to the end of Year 6. Pupils are taught well in all parts of the school, they work from a rich curriculum and they are given outstanding care and guidance. The quality of provision and the standards achieved in Nursery and Reception are good.

Guided most effectively by the headteacher, leadership and management have many strengths, especially the very clear focus on improvement. Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's performance and are very aware of areas requiring enhancement, including the provision of specialised outdoor facilities for children in Reception, and increasing the opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work. The school has taken many steps forward since the previous inspection; it has the capacity to maintain this brisk rate of improvement into the future and it clearly gives good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils greater opportunities to evaluate their own work.
- Work creatively to develop the necessary outdoor facilities for children in the Reception class.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards are above average and pupils make good progress. The school has a positive track record of above-average standards at the end of Year 2. At the end of Year 6, standards have varied a little from year to year, but have remained at least above average, as they were in 2005. In some years they have been well above average.

In Nursery and Reception, children make good progress from their broadly average starting point because their work is carefully structured and made enjoyable. By the time they start Year 1 most children have reached their targets. Achievement is also good in Years 1 and 2, where individual pupils' progress is tracked rigorously to ensure they move ahead consistently.

In the past, although at least satisfactory, progress was not consistent in Years 3 to 6. This was due to staffing difficulties that have now been resolved, though the impact was still evident in the 2005 results. Such inconsistency in progress has now been

eliminated. This year the school has set very challenging targets for the end of Year 6, which the pupils are well on course to meet. The targets for Year 5 are even higher and there is very positive evidence to show that they are likely to be achieved.

The school ensures that pupils of all backgrounds learn well. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported successfully, especially by teaching assistants, and they make good progress. Higher-attaining pupils also progress well. Their work is demanding and is sharply focused on building the skills of investigation and enquiry. The school tracks the progress of pupils from different ethnic groups in great detail and records show that all do well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is a harmonious community where pupils share mutual respect for each other's cultures, faiths and traditions. Visits to other places of worship and celebration of important festivals enhance their awareness and understanding. Very good relationships between all adults and pupils are clearly evident. Pupils feel valued because teachers treat them as individuals and respond effectively to their needs.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding because, as they say, teachers make learning fun. It is clear that pupils enjoy being in school and they work hard in order to meet their targets. Behaviour is good and pupils work and play happily together. They know how to keep safe, understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and take very good care of each other.

Attendance levels are satisfactory and pupils arrive in good time for their lessons. The school works in close partnership with the Educational Welfare Officer to encourage all pupils to attend regularly.

Pupils are proud to be members of the school council and talk enthusiastically of their involvement in deciding what happens in school. They are well prepared for growing up and make an outstanding contribution to the local and wider community through links with the church and other local schools, entertaining older residents and supporting a variety of charities. Pupils develop very good basic skills and also the ability to work in teams and to take responsibility.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Consistently high expectations underpin the good quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Teachers and teaching assistants put the pupils' needs first when planning work and ensure that activities are carefully structured to develop skills,

knowledge and understanding at a good rate. They ensure that the planned work provides the necessary challenge for each ability group.

The school has successfully eliminated the inconsistencies in teaching that it had previously identified in Years 3 and 4. Now all pupils are taught effectively and consistently. Assessment is generally accurate and is used carefully to track progress. However, there are not yet enough opportunities for pupils to assess their own learning during lessons.

The pupils were keen to tell inspectors that teachers make their learning fun, enjoyable and interesting. It is also clear that the pupils find it challenging. As one pupil said, 'My target was difficult, but I kept trying and my teacher helped me. I got there and it was worth it'.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The interesting curriculum helps to make learning fun and promotes good progress. Special prominence is given to religious education because of the school's Catholic status. Pupils benefit from the strong links between subjects, which focus well on the development of basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers are currently working effectively to incorporate similar links with information and communication technology.

Arts education is a strength of the school. Very effective use is made of the skills and expertise of visiting musicians, artists and writers. There was eager anticipation in school to see the final results of the recent Saturday Workshop on ceramic tiles, which will be used to decorate the entrance.

Children in the Nursery and Reception enjoy a vibrant curriculum that is generally well resourced. However, whilst the school has provided the necessary purpose-designed outdoor zone to allow Nursery children to fully develop their physical and creative skills, it has not been practical to do the same for those in Reception owing to the limitations of the site.

A very good programme of additional enrichment activities enlivens pupils' learning and successfully broadens their experience.

The pupils particularly enjoy the residential days at Alton Castle and the visits to the local synagogue, mosque, temple and Catholic heritage centre at Harvington Hall. The school also enjoys a strong sporting tradition.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school is a very happy, friendly place where the care, guidance and support provided for pupils are outstanding. Adults know the pupils very well and pupils feel safe and are confident they can ask for help and advice quickly whenever needed. The school works very closely with parents to support their children's learning.

Rigorous checks ensure that the school site is a safe, secure and very well maintained environment. Child protection procedures are securely in place and all staff fully aware of the guidelines. Risk assessments are evaluated and reviewed regularly and are also rigorously undertaken for all visits.

Assessment procedures are very comprehensive and pupils know their targets in detail. Older pupils explain their progress towards these targets clearly. The procedures for analysing data, target setting and tracking pupils' progress are excellent.

Parents are very welcome in school and staff are always accessible to those who have any concerns. Parents have very positive views of the school and are key partners in their children's education.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is well led and managed. A very strong steer is given by the headteacher, who has high expectations of the pupils and staff. Senior leaders have a thorough understanding of the work of the school that enables them to pinpoint areas requiring improvement quickly and effectively. They then ensure that such priorities are tackled efficiently. The overall focus on improvement is outstanding and the school gives convincing judgements of its own performance based on its rigorous processes of self-evaluation.

Governors have a keen sense of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are fully involved in the comprehensive and rigorous system of school development planning and provide considerable expertise, especially in financial and buildings-related matters, to enable the school to provide good value for money.

Effective systems for assessment, target setting and tracking pupils' progress are helping to improve their achievement. Sensibly, the school has firm plans to enhance this system. Pupils from all ability groups and backgrounds are given good opportunities to succeed. This is as noticeable for children in Nursery and Reception, those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those from different ethnic backgrounds. Very challenging targets are set for academic standards and personal development, which the pupils achieve with considerable expertise.

The school has made good improvement since its previous inspection, despite a period when staffing difficulties led to a slackening of pupils' progress in Years 3 and 4. Standards are rising well and pupils' personal development is now outstanding. It is evident that the school has the potential to build on its successes at a good rate.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	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	1	NA

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	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	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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 the kind welcome that you gave us when we visited you. We enjoyed talking with you and finding out what you think about your school. You gave us one major message – that you really like coming to school because your teachers are fun to work with.

We found a lot of good things in school.

- You work hard and do well in your work.
- You reach your targets, even when you find them challenging.
- You look after each other, play happily together and behave well.
- You are taught well.
- Your headteacher wants you all to do your best and she leads the school very successfully.

We think that there are two things that could be improved.

- You could be given more chances to talk about how well you are learning.
- Reception children could be provided with better playing and learning space outdoors.

You can help your teachers make these improvements by telling them how well you are meeting your targets and by using your suggestion boxes to say how you think the outside space for Reception children can be improved.

Our report will be sent to your homes. It identifies some outstanding things at St Mary of the Mount that you may want to read about. If you look carefully you will find a bit about your Saturday Workshop to make tiles for the entrance hall. Which one do you like best?