



# St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 108396  
**LEA** Gateshead  
**Inspection number** 277963  
**Inspection dates** 2 February 2006 to 3 February 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Graeme Clarke

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Duckpool Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Whickham
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 4205828
<b>Number on roll</b>	196	<b>Fax number</b>	0191 4205828
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Jason Leng
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 June 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Mary McMillan

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 2 February 2006 - 3 February 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 277963
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Mary's Primary School, Whickham is a little smaller than average. Most pupils come from Roman Catholic homes and others are from mainly Anglican families. The locality is average in social and economic terms, although only a few pupils take free school meals. Pupils join the school with broadly average attainments, and a low proportion has learning difficulties. Most pupils are of a white British heritage, and a small minority are from other ethnic backgrounds. The school has gained the Active Mark and Healthy Schools awards.

## 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's is a good school which successfully promotes its belief that every child matters. This matches the school's evaluation. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and pupils make good progress in the reception class. Good teaching by a well managed team helps pupils make good progress throughout the school, although some high attaining pupils, particularly in Years 1 and 2, are not challenged sufficiently in mathematics. By the end of Year 6 in 2005, many attained above average results in the national tests. All pupils did as well as predicted, and some better than expected. The school charts pupils' attainments annually and sets challenging targets. However, it does not formally gauge pupils' progress sufficiently during the year to help them do as well as they can. Parents comment favourably on how their children enjoy coming to school, and that their children are safe. They value too how the school develops their children's confidence and self assurance. One commented, 'our son has changed – he is so much more out-going and brighter, thanks to the school'. The curriculum is good and successfully promotes pupils' personal development as well as their academic progress. The school is well led and managed. The headteacher fosters very strong relationships and partnerships which sustain the school's very strong community spirit. Governors have a sound knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development, and are poised to use information about pupils' achievements more extensively in evaluating its work. The school dealt quickly and effectively with the issues raised at the last inspection. It has sustained high standards and is well placed to improve further. It gives good value for money.

not applicable

### What the school should do to improve further

- Make the assessment, pupil tracking and target setting system manageable and use it during the year to ensure all pupils make the progress they should.
- Raise the levels of challenge for high attaining pupils in mathematics, particularly in Years 1 and 2.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards are above average and the pupils achieve well. Reception pupils make good progress from a broadly average starting point and achieve well to reach generally above average standards. In the 2005 national tests, Year 2 pupils did well in reading but fewer than expected gained the highest levels in writing and, especially, in mathematics. Results in Year 6 were above average, notably so in science, which follows the pattern of recent years. Relatively few pupils gained the highest level in English compared with science. In relation to their earlier attainments, most pupils, especially boys, did better than predicted. All pupils did well taking into account their background, starting points and capabilities.

Currently, pupils in all classes make good progress and achieve well. Reception pupils are developing information technology skills: they competently use the mouse to open a program. Pupils in an outstandingly well managed Year 3 lesson expanded and demonstrated above average mental addition and subtraction skills. Year 6 Pupils were impressive in discussing Noyes's old-fashioned use of language in his poem 'The Highwayman'. Very good support helps pupils with learning difficulties make good progress. Parents value highly that their children enjoy school.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupil's personal development is outstanding and is a strength of the school. The Catholic ethos is evident in all aspects of school life. It supports calm, excellent relationships and a purposeful atmosphere for learning. Pupils have many friends. They are confident about talking to adults and speak warmly about the school, saying that they feel safe and secure. Their positive feelings about school are demonstrated by their excellent behaviour and attendance and their enthusiasm to contribute in lessons.

Pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils participate fully in prayers each morning and are encouraged to reflect. They show concern for others in the way they wholeheartedly support many charities. Pupils on the school council proudly explain how they have used the ideas of all pupils to improve the quality of playtimes. They make really good use of the outdoor equipment to develop their social skills. Pupils have many experiences in and out of school that will prepare them well for their future lives. All develop a sense of responsibility by having jobs to do to ensure the smooth running of the school community.

Pupils are very clear about ways to promote healthy lifestyles through sensible diet and frequent exercise.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. In turn, pupils make good progress in reading, writing, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT). Teachers engage pupils well and provide a range of practical activities to help them understand better. Teachers often use interactive computer technology effectively to consolidate the key points of the lesson, for example with Year 4 pupils when they enthusiastically showed their mental agility in handling money.

Small group activities in the Foundation Stage make learning fun. Skilfully blended questioning and explanation motivates and encourages older pupils to think and contribute to the lesson. In some classes pupils make very good progress because activities are well matched to their capabilities. However, some higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough because teachers sometimes give all pupils in the

class the same level of work. This is especially true in mathematics in Years 1 and 2. Marking is regular, but does not give pupils enough explanation of how to improve. Pupils have challenging targets to aim for, but they contain difficult-to-understand criteria, and so some pupils are not sure about how well they are doing. Pupils with learning difficulties are well catered for with specialist teaching support.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features. Work is thoroughly planned to develop literacy and numeracy skills, and new facilities allow wider use of ICT. The Foundation Stage curriculum covers all six areas of learning, but planned opportunities for self-directed play are not clear enough and the area outside is underused. In subjects such as art and physical education some specialist teaching enhances the quality of pupils' work, with some excellent ceramics work displayed. An excellent range of opportunities supports pupils' personal development. They particularly enjoy some modern languages teaching and a wide variety of visits, adventurous activities and after school clubs, which are very well attended. Community links enhance cultural development; for example, the 'Water Project' connects the school with others in Germany, France and Kenya. The school has the Active Mark and Healthy Schools awards for the way it prepares pupils well for a healthy lifestyle.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school takes good care of its pupils and is highly committed to ensuring their health, safety and welfare. Governors ensure child protection procedures and rigorous risk assessments are very securely established, up to date and understood by all staff. Parents of pupils in reception are pleased that their children settle well. Many parents willingly support their children's work at home. Pupils say that it is easy to make friends and they know what to do if they feel unhappy. Individual education plans helpfully support the good progress of pupils with learning difficulties. Teachers keep a watchful eye on each pupil and the school has rigorous procedures for tracking performance annually. However, the way it is organised means that the systems do not give a clear enough overview of pupils' progress during the year. This makes it hard to use to quickly identify and support individuals not making the progress they should. Procedures specifically for the Foundation Stage are difficult to manage.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Governors properly hold the headteacher's good leadership in high regard. She sets the tone by establishing an effective climate for learning in which everyone has confidence in what they do and respect for each other. Every child does matter. Good management leads pupils to take part enthusiastically in health related activities. It makes them feel safe and valued, and they behave impeccably. The school fosters

achievement and enjoyment and celebrates pupils' accomplishments by displaying their work prominently. Many pupils contribute to help the school run smoothly, and this builds confidence for their future well-being. One parent commented, 'This is a lovely school with happy children and a great atmosphere, and I'm proud to say my children love it'.

The headteacher has an accurate overview of the school's work and clear plans for its development. She observes teaching in lessons, and uses positive feedback to promote improvement. She fosters quality and consistency amongst the staff through training, guidance and support. Many governors are recently appointed and their first hand knowledge of the school is not yet gained as systematically as it could be. Their evaluation of the school, in full partnership with the headteacher, is accurate, but does not reflect the wealth of evidence about pupils' performance and progress and their other accomplishments. Governors ensure that the school works properly within all regulations. They spend its money wisely. Determined leadership quickly resolved all the issues raised by the last inspection and sustains above average attainment. The school has a good capacity for further improvement.

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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?	2	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	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	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	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

<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>	2	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	2	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	1	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

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Mrs Mary McMillan

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Tyne and Wear

NE16 4HB

6 February 2006

Dear Pupils

We really enjoyed visiting your school for two days last week when we came to see how well you are doing. Thank you for helping us when we called into your classrooms to see you at work, and at the meeting with those of you on the school council. It was very important for us to find out what you were doing and also how you assist with running the school. You were always very polite and helpful.

What we liked about your school

You are being taught well and you make good progress with your work.

You are really well behaved, have good manners, and work hard. Mrs McMillan and all her staff are very proud of you.

The school gives you many opportunities outside of lessons to discover things about the world and to find out as much as you can about people in other countries.

You are safe and happy because all the adults in the school look after you very well.

Mrs McMillan is a good headteacher. The school has good governors and staff. They all want to help you, so please listen to what they say.

What we think could be improved

Yours is a good school and we've made some suggestions for the governors and Mrs McMillan to think about.

We've asked them to look every few weeks at their records of how well each of you is getting on with your work, and to give you more help straight away if you are having any difficulties. We'd also like them to make the words on your targets easier for you to understand so you know how well you are doing.

We also think some of you could tackle harder work in mathematics.

With best wishes to you all

Graeme Clarke

Lead inspector