



# St Mary's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 108840  
**LEA** Sunderland  
**Inspection number** 278057  
**Inspection dates** 9 November 2005 to 10 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Dave Byrne

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Meadowside
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Thornholme Road
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		Sunderland, Tyne and Wear
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 5536087
<b>Number on roll</b>	472	<b>Fax number</b>	0191 5536088
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Maureen Dale
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 November 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 9 November 2005 - 10 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 278057
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out over a period of two days by three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

This large primary school educates 418 children, aged from 3 to 11, and serves a suburb of Sunderland. Very few pupils join or leave the school at other than the normal times. Overall, the attainment of children when they start school is average for their age. The vast majority of pupils are from a White British background, with a very small minority from other ethnic backgrounds. None requires support for English as an additional language. Relatively low proportions of pupils are eligible for free-school meals or have learning difficulties or disabilities.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school, where pupils are well motivated and happy, and where achievement is good and standards high. The vast majority of pupils make good progress overall. Teaching and learning are good, with some very good features in the Foundation Stage, where children do well. Effective support for pupils with learning and physical difficulties makes sure that they are fully included in school life. Assessment is satisfactory, but it does not involve pupils enough to ensure that they can understand what they need to do to improve. Also, teachers do not use it consistently to track the progress of groups within their classes. Pupils' personal development is good. They are very aware of how to live healthily. Very good relationships contribute to their very good behaviour and enable them to take responsibility for running some aspects of the school. The good curriculum is enriched by a wide range of additional activities that bring learning to life. Global issues and multi-cultural awareness are effectively developed through innovative strategies that enable pupils to link with others abroad. Overall, the school promotes safety and security effectively but the assessments of risk are not always recorded to a high enough standard. Staff work together very well as a team, and under its good leadership and management, the school has maintained high standards since the last inspection. The school knows itself well, and, given the continued quality of management and teaching, it is well set to improve in the future. It gives good value for money.

not applicable

### What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of assessment in all classes, so that pupils take part in setting their own targets for improvement, and teachers have a clearer picture of the achievement and progress of all groups in their classes.
- Ensure that all assessments of risk are accurately recorded.
- Encourage more direct governor involvement in monitoring the school's performance.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

The inspection confirms the school's judgement that standards and achievement are good. Pupils make good progress and reach above average standards. Since 2000, standards have been consistently high in mathematics and science. Standards have also been good in English, although in 2004 they dipped significantly. Decisive action was taken and standards in English have risen steeply and are now well above average. The high targets set for pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science are usually met. In other subjects, sporting achievement is good, and pupils do well in French as a result of close links with the local high school and a school in France. Very well managed provision enables pupils with learning and physical difficulties to reach the good targets set for them. Whilst the more able pupils make good progress, the

needs of the very able are not fully catered for, and for this small minority, progress is satisfactory. Children start school with standards typical for their age, and with strengths in their personal, social and emotional development and in speech and language. Recent improvements in the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage have boosted children's progress in all areas of their learning, particularly their ability to think and act on their own.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors and school agree that pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy learning and are proud of their school. Their enthusiastic participation in all that it offers is reflected in good attendance and punctuality. Behaviour is very good and at times exemplary. Pupils are thoughtful and polite, and put others first. This contributes to the very positive atmosphere in lessons and at play. They feel safe and free from bullying or racial harassment. On the rare occasions when an incident occurs, it is managed effectively and sensitively. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthily and know the importance of good diet and exercise. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a good sense of right and wrong and form very good relationships with others. The responsibilities that they eagerly take on contribute well to their social development. They are very involved in raising funds for a wide variety of charities. Older pupils make a good contribution to decision-making through the school council, and demonstrate mature attitudes, particularly in the care they show for the welfare of the youngest pupils. However, fewer opportunities exist for younger pupils to play a part in the smooth running of the school. Pupils' strong basic skills equip them well for their future education and life. Links with a number of schools abroad, for example in Peru, Kenya and France, significantly contribute to pupils' good knowledge and understanding of other cultures and global issues.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. The level of challenge provided in lessons ensures that pupils of all abilities are engaged in and enjoy learning. Teaching assistants play an important role by giving good advice and encouragement to pupils with learning and physical difficulties. Children get a good start to school life because of stimulating teaching in the Foundation Stage. Across the school, teachers promote the basic skills of literacy and numeracy well, and increasingly use information and communications technology (ICT) to make learning exciting. A good team spirit amongst teaching and support staff gives them the confidence to pursue new initiatives. For example, teachers are enthusiastically finding new ways of linking subjects together to make learning more continuous and coherent. They know their pupils well. Good use is made of assessment in the Foundation Stage and for monitoring the progress of pupils with

learning and physical difficulties. However, the use of formal assessments across the school is relatively weak. The link between marking and assessment is unsatisfactory, and not all teachers track the relative progress of different groups within their classes. Pupils are unsure about what they should do better because they are not asked to take enough responsibility for assessing their own learning.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's view that this area is a strength is confirmed by the inspection. A thoughtfully planned curriculum, enhanced by a good range of additional activities, inspires pupils to learn, especially in the Foundation Stage, where pupils' knowledge and understanding of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and science are developed well. Work in several subjects ensures that pupils develop a good awareness of the importance of regular exercise and working safely. Good links with a local secondary school have a very positive impact on the curriculum. These have established French in the school, developed work in food technology and sport, and strengthened support for the most able pupils through 'master classes'. The needs of pupils with learning and physical difficulties are catered for very well, but the curriculum does not give enough challenge to the most able. Whilst the planning of subjects is good across the school, and some good links are made between them, the integration of subjects is at an early stage of development. Pupils love the way that the curriculum is enriched by links with the community and by visitors and educational visits. The school has a strong commitment to anti-racism and the development of multi-cultural elements in the curriculum. It uses ICT, for example video conferencing, very creatively to widen pupils' global understanding

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's judgement was too generous in the inspectors' view. Although pupils are well protected, risk assessments are not rigorous enough. Good provisions for care, guidance and support make a strong contribution to pupils' personal and academic development. Pupils with learning and physical disabilities are very effectively supported and are fully included in school life. Individual education plans are tailored well to pupils' needs and reviewed regularly. Some aspects of the care for pupils with emotional difficulties are exemplary, for example the support provided by the school's pastoral care worker. Staff have built up very good relationships with pupils and links with home to ensure continuous support for pupils. Although teachers guide pupils well in their academic development, not enough is done to involve pupils in their own assessments and evaluations. School leaders have rightly identified this as an area for development.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. This judgement matches the school's. The school emphasises good personal development and achieves high academic standards. The headteacher is highly respected and gives strong leadership, particularly in pupils' care and guidance. Subjects are well- managed, and the provision for the Foundation Stage and for pupils with learning and physical difficulties is very good. Financial management is good; staff are wisely deployed and learning resources efficiently used. Most of the accommodation is adequate, but outdoor facilities are limited and the hall is too small. The school's accurate evaluation of its own strengths and weaknesses leads to a useful school improvement plan. This prompts decisive action where necessary, for example to raise standards in English. Assessment data are satisfactorily used to monitor the school's performance, but are not yet used consistently across the school to set class and group targets. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive, but not involved enough in finding out for themselves how well the school is doing. Since the last inspection, high standards have been maintained, pupils' cultural awareness has improved and there is better provision for the Foundation Stage. The school has good capacity to secure its future 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>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	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	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	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	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	3	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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St Mary's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

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SR2 7QN

11 November 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed joining you in lessons and talking with you during lunch and playtimes. We were impressed by how caring you are and helpful to others. You enjoy school and seem to like learning new things. It is good to see the way you try to eat healthily and take exercise.

You are lucky to have such caring teachers who do their best to help you if you need to talk about anything. Your very good behaviour and willingness to work in lessons were most noticeable. Those of you on the school council certainly make a valuable contribution to the running of the school. Your teachers value your thoughts, which help them to find ways of making school even better.

You are attending a good school. It does well to make sure that you learn to read, write and do mathematics to a good standard, and also gives you the chance to learn French. The many good links with other places, such as the secondary schools, the university and schools in other countries. These help you to experience things outside your school and to understand how children live elsewhere in the world.

Although you are mature and happily take responsibility for a variety of jobs in school, we feel that the school could involve you more in thinking about how well you are doing and what you could do better.

We hope you continue to enjoy school.

Kind regards,

Dave Byrne, Kathryn Dodd and Tim Nelson (The Inspectors)

Annex B