



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110028
Local Authority Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number 278350
Inspection dates 1–2 November 2006
Reporting inspector Graham Lee

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Cookham Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Maidenhead
Age range of pupils	5–11		SL6 7EG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01628 622570
Number on roll (school)	238	Fax number	01628 680017
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Martin McNamee
		Headteacher	Mrs Janice Laycock
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 1999		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
5–11	1–2 November 2006	278350

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school which mainly draws its pupils from the Catholic community in the borough. Pupils come from a mixture of social and economic backgrounds. Two out of three pupils are of White British origin and the remainder from a range of ethnic backgrounds. A few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is higher than average. At this time of the year there are no children in the Foundation Stage.

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 with outstanding features. Pupils thrive in its caring and supportive Catholic ethos, where the nurture of each individual is of paramount importance. The school is held in high regard by parents and one, reflecting the views of many, commented 'St Mary's is a wonderful and caring school where the children are well educated and happy'. Pupils feel very safe and secure and gain confidence because of the excellent relationships. They are proud of their school and are clear that the Catholic foundations teach them to 'become peacemakers and spread love' as one Year 6 boy put it. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning and their behaviour is exemplary. As a result, they achieve well and reach standards that are significantly above average by the time they leave the school.

The school continues to improve because of the strong leadership of the new headteacher, supported by a very effective management team and committed staff and governing body. They have created a highly supportive learning environment and have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The progress of every individual pupil is followed carefully. Where potential underachievement is identified effective measures are taken to address it. For example, an intensive focus on writing has resulted in rapidly improving standards in the past two years. Issues from the last inspection have been addressed and the school is well placed to improve still further.

Pupils achieve well because the teaching is consistently good. When they enter the school children have wide-ranging skills and understanding. They make good progress in the one or two terms they spend in the Foundation class because of a stimulating curriculum. They continue to make generally good progress as they move through the school. However, some of the more able pupils in the infants are not doing as well in mathematics as they are in reading and writing because the work is sometimes too easy for them. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because their needs are identified at an early stage and they are extremely well supported by a skilled team of teaching assistants. A good curriculum also contributes well to pupils' progress. It meets pupils' personal as well as academic needs and provides a wide range of additional activities which enrich pupils' experience and adds to their enjoyment.

The school works outstandingly well with parents and outside agencies to promote high quality care and guidance. This results in the outstanding personal development of learners. Pupils enjoy all aspects of school life. This is not fully reflected in their average levels of attendance because some parents do not ensure that their children attend regularly enough. Pupils have a very good awareness of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles. One Year 2 pupil, munching on a carrot at playtime, said 'we need to eat fresh vegetables to stay healthy because of the vitamins'. Pupils also make a significant contribution to the environment through their work as an 'eco school'. For example, they talk enthusiastically and knowledgeably about their work on composting, recycling and conserving water.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers consistently challenge more able pupils in the infants to achieve as well as they can in mathematics.
- Work with parents to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well from a range of starting points. Children make good progress in the limited time they spend in the Foundation class. However, by the time they enter Year 1 a number have not reached the goals set for children of that age due to their varied ability on entry. Pupils make generally good progress in the infants. Standards at the age of seven have improved significantly in recent years and are now broadly average. The achievement of the more able pupils in the infants is much improved in reading and writing. However, these pupils are not doing as well in mathematics. Pupils continue to make good progress in the juniors and reach standards in English, mathematics and science that are significantly above average. This is particularly noteworthy in view of the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. These pupils make good progress and many reach the standards expected for their age. Similarly, the few pupils who are learning English make as much progress as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well being, including the social, moral, spiritual and cultural dimensions, is outstanding. Their enjoyment of school is evident in the enthusiastic and diligent approach in lessons and the way they talk about all aspects of school life. Pupils' attendance has improved in recent years as a result of a range of successful strategies adopted by the school. It is now average overall but there is room for improvement as a number of pupils do not attend regularly enough. Pupils feel very safe and 'can't remember the last time anything bad happened' as one said on behalf of the group. They conduct themselves very safely around the school. Pupils have a very good understanding of the need to eat healthily and many are active participants in the additional sporting activities and events such as 'walk to school week'. Pupils have a real pride in their school community and take delight in the achievements of others, in assemblies for example. They also take their responsibilities on the school council very seriously and are clear that 'the school really benefits from what they do' as one pupil put it. They also make a significant contribution to the parish and wider communities and raise money for a variety of charities. Pupils' outstanding attitudes and good basic skills ensure that they are very well prepared for secondary school and the world beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers manage their classes well and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They generally plan well together to meet the wide range of pupils' needs in their mixed-age classes. They are enthusiastic and use resources such as interactive technology very effectively to engage learners. Consequently, pupils of all abilities have very positive attitudes to learning and generally achieve well. Occasionally, the more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently in mathematics in the infants. Teachers give pupils effective feedback on how they might improve. Pupils are becoming increasingly involved in assessing their own work and that of their peers. For example, in a lower junior lesson, pupils gave perceptive and constructive feedback on the quality of each other's writing. Specialist teaching is used effectively in modern foreign languages, science, music and art to enhance pupils' achievements in these areas.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It develops pupils' basic skills effectively and also allows them to be creative and enjoy their education. The curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties is very effective and the school is developing its provision for gifted and talented pupils, which is not yet fully established. The school has addressed the weaknesses in the Foundation Stage, identified in the last inspection, to provide a stimulating curriculum for the youngest children. Pupils develop good skills in the use of information and communication technology and use these effectively to support their learning in other subjects. For instance, the upper juniors researched the internet very effectively, saving sites for future reference, to find information about the Blitz. The curriculum also caters very effectively for pupils' personal development and this is enhanced through initiatives such as 'eco' and 'healthy' schools. The curriculum is enriched in a variety of ways. Visits and visitors are a regular feature of school life and pupils to take part in a wide range of additional activities to cater for pupils interests in sport, music and the arts, for example.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, support and guidance of pupils are outstanding. Staff look after the children extremely well and demonstrate a consistently high quality of care and guidance. One parent noted that 'the emphasis is not only on education but on making every child feel special and giving them a real feeling of self worth'. This enables pupils to feel safe and to gain confidence and leads to their good achievement and outstanding personal development. The school works closely with a wide range of agencies to support those that are vulnerable and those with particular needs. Pupils' progress is

tracked very carefully to ensure that none fall behind and very good guidance is given on how they might improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher provides very good leadership and has built on the school's existing strengths to raise pupils' achievements still further. She is ably supported by the senior management team who bring a range of strengths to their roles. They have created an effective staff team who work very well together. The governing body is very supportive and offers a good balance of challenge and support to school leaders. Governors are aware that their strategies for monitoring the work of the school need to be strengthened. At the heart of the school's work is a very strong and caring Catholic ethos, which welcomes pupils from all backgrounds and of all abilities. This results in high quality care and the outstanding personal development of pupils. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is rigorous and supportive and has resulted in a consistently good quality of teaching throughout the school. This contributes to good self-evaluation which ensures that leaders know what the school has to do next to improve further. Currently they are adopting strategies to improve the achievement of the more able infants in mathematics but these have not yet resulted in higher standards.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing to thank you all for making us so welcome when we visited the school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our time at St. Mary's and you all helped us by being so friendly and keen to talk to us. I thought you would like to know what we found out.

You and your parents are right to be proud of the school because it is a good school and in some things it is outstanding. All the staff work hard to make sure that you are all safe and extremely well looked after. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and the way you all get on so well together. It was clear that you were all proud to be part of the special Catholic atmosphere of the school.

You all achieve well and are very well prepared for secondary school. You make a very good start in the Foundation Stage where all the staff help you to settle in to school. You do well as you move through the school because you told us that the teachers and assistants work hard to help you with your work. Those of you who find things a little bit more difficult are given lots of extra help. You are also very lucky because you have so many interesting and exciting things to do in school. We were very impressed with what you are doing for the environment through composting and recycling.

Your headteacher has done a lot in the last year to make sure that the school gets even better. She is helped very well by all the staff. We have asked them to do a couple of things that we think might help. You can help with both. In the infants most of you are doing very well but we think some of you could be doing even better in mathematics if the work was a little harder. Secondly, some of you have too much time away from school which doesn't help with your learning. We have asked your parents to make sure that you come to school every day except of course when you are unwell.

We would like to wish St Mary's and all of you the very best of success in the future.

Yours truly

Graham Lee

Lead Inspector