



# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 112338  
**LEA** Cumbria  
**Inspection number** 278909  
**Inspection dates** 1 March 2006 to 2 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mrs Pat Kime

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Holden Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Salterbeck
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Workington, Cumbria
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01946 830433
<b>Number on roll</b>	143	<b>Fax number</b>	01946 830430
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Michael Rooney
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 October 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Catherine Pearson

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 1 March 2006 - 2 March 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 278909
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

The school serves a disadvantaged community and a significant number of the pupils face difficulties in their lives. A higher than average proportion of pupils, nearly a third, receives free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average for the size of school but a significant group of these pupils have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. A very high proportion of pupils come to St Mary's part way through their primary schooling, often well into the juniors. All the pupils are of white British heritage. There have been many changes since the last inspection in 2000. The number of pupils has increased by about a third; the headteacher and all but one of the class teachers have been appointed since then. Three of these teachers are new to the profession.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The school provides a very high quality of education and care. The staff expect the very best of every pupil and there is a very caring atmosphere in which everyone knows they really matter. The teaching is of an outstanding quality overall and pupils enjoy learning. They want to achieve and they make outstanding progress, especially in English, and in their personal development. Provision in the Foundation Stage (Reception) is good.

The school is very well led and everyone works together to help the pupils succeed. However, because so many of the teachers are new to the profession, senior staff carry a heavy load. These staff know very well how effective the school is and what could be improved further and they work very hard to make sure pupils achieve their best. Nonetheless, the systems for keeping track of pupils' progress could be sharpened. The school's self-evaluation was cautious and therefore unduly modest about some aspects of its work, notably the quality of teaching and the care, guidance and support for pupils. The school provides outstanding value for money. Much has been achieved since the last inspection and the school is well placed to continue to move forward.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Refine the systems for noting pupils' standards and keeping track of their progress so staff can see more easily how well pupils are doing across the school and nip any potential underachievement in the bud.
- Develop the capacity of new teachers to lead the school's work in various subjects, in order to spread this responsibility among staff.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

Pupils are achieving extremely well at St Mary's. This is the result of high quality teaching and the staff's determination that all will do as well as possible. Children who start in reception can do less than most children of their age and some are a long way behind. Many pupils join the school later and a lot of them have much catching up to do. All pupils progress equally well because the school goes to great lengths to provide extra help for those who struggle or lack confidence in their ability and expects a lot of the more able. Taken overall, the standards pupils reach represent outstanding progress from their starting points given their time at the school.

Children get a good start to their education in the reception class. They make good gains in learning, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development, but they generally do not reach average standards by the end of the year. Pupils' progress over the next two years is very good and, by the end of Key Stage 1, standards in reading and writing are broadly average, though a little lower in mathematics. Very good progress continues in Key Stage 2 and in the top class pupils make very rapid

progress because teaching is of an exceptionally high quality and expectations are very, very high.

Last year's leavers did extremely well in the end of Key Stage 2 tests. Their results in English were well above the national average. This is because of the school's drive to raise standards in English, particularly writing. Their results were above average in science and average in mathematics. Standards in the present Year 6 are close to average. These pupils' progress faltered earlier in the school but they are now doing very well.

Standards in information and communication technology and experimental science, weaknesses at the last inspection, are now at least satisfactory. This is evident from pupils' work on display around the school.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make very good progress in their personal development. Many have limited social skills when they start in reception and a significant number of those who start later have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. Nevertheless, pupils' behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good and their attitudes to learning are extremely positive. They develop responsibility, caring attitudes and the ability to form excellent relationships. These attributes, along with their academic achievement, stand them in good stead to benefit from secondary education.

Pupils greatly enjoy school life and learning. They are keen to learn and they try hard to achieve their targets. They talk with pride about the tasks they undertake to contribute to the smooth running of the school and its caring ethos; for instance, acting as librarians and playground buddies. They are enthusiastic about the out of class clubs, the many educational visits and participation in community life. The majority of pupils are very well behaved in lessons and around school but a few sometimes cause incidents such as fights in the playground. Pupils say there is occasional bullying but the headteacher deals with it swiftly, very robustly and effectively. The school's ethos supports the development of consideration, respect and tolerance. Pupils know about cultural diversity and understand the harm racism can do. They learn how to keep healthy and safe and, for the most part, they put this learning into practice.

The school, in partnership with the Education Welfare Officer, makes strenuous efforts to promote the importance of regular school attendance. Attendance has improved and so far this year stands at 96% which is good.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

The overall quality of teaching is outstanding and its effectiveness is evident from pupils' progress. In several of the lessons seen, teaching was of a very good quality

and in some, in Key Stage 2, it was excellent. Classrooms are lively and stimulating learning environments. Teachers establish good discipline whilst maintaining very good relationships with pupils. They organise their classrooms and learning resources very well so lessons run smoothly. They set high expectations and they match work well to pupils' learning needs so all experience success. In the most effective lessons, teachers' very strong subject knowledge enabled them to focus pupils' efforts on what was most important and take learning to a high level. They motivated pupils to try their very best by expecting a high standard of work and telling pupils exactly what they had to do to achieve success. In an English lesson, the teacher skilfully taught pupils how to evaluate the quality of each other's poems in a respectful and constructive way. At the end of the lesson, they knew how well they had done and felt good about their achievements. They were motivated to do even better next time. Marking is generally good. At its best, it is extremely incisive, guiding and challenging pupils so that even the most able are pushed on as far as possible. Additional staff are used very effectively to support learning in lessons and with small groups of pupils who need extra help.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a good curriculum which is carefully planned to ensure that pupils cover all that is required. There are some very good examples of successful work that links subjects and motivates pupils. For instance, in one class, design and technology has been linked to dance. Pupils created a dance with support from a visiting specialist and have been invited to perform it at a dance festival in a local theatre. They have designed tee-shirts to wear for their performance. However, such work is not yet systematically planned throughout the school. Enrichment of the curriculum, particularly through educational visits, visitors, and clubs is very good. Visits are closely linked to the curriculum and capitalise well on local centres of interest and education value.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Pastoral care is of the highest order. The headteacher and senior staff set a superb example of commitment to pupils' well-being. They are dedicated to supporting every pupil and enabling them to flourish. All the adults are consistent in their expectations of pupils' behaviour and interest in their welfare. All required procedures, for instance, for child protection and risk assessment, are in place and known to staff. The school's support for vulnerable pupils and their families is unwavering and highly effective. For example, arrangements have been made for pupils who need a boost to their confidence and self-esteem to attend an after school 'Stardom' programme. Several parents wrote praising the quality of care and support; for instance, 'I cannot thank St Mary's enough. Without their support we would not have managed'. Academic guidance is also a strength. Pupils know exactly where they are with their work. They have clear targets and, with their teachers, they note progress towards meeting them. Parents of pupils with particular gifts and talents are informed of opportunities that might develop them.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. She is passionate in her commitment to the pupils and her determination that each will achieve as well as possible. She is very well supported by the equally committed senior teachers and together they make a very strong team. They have created a happy and open ethos in which new teachers flourish, suggestions are welcomed and the talents and enthusiasm of all staff and helpers are utilised for the benefit of the pupils.

The school evaluates its effectiveness very well and parents, pupils and governors are involved in the process. The senior staff know all the pupils well and they have very high expectations for the school and the pupils' achievement. They monitor the effectiveness of the school's work rigorously, primarily through observation of lessons, examination of teachers' planning and pupils' work, and analysis of test results. Therefore, they know what could be improved and have plans to do what is needed. However, the systems for keeping track of pupils' progress and knowing whether they are doing well enough are not as streamlined and easy for staff to interpret as they could be.

Their fresh ideas and enthusiasm of teachers at the start of their careers are welcomed. However, the heavy load of leading the school's work across subjects falls on a small group of staff. For instance, one teacher is responsible for leading five subjects as well as heading Key Stage 2. The leadership potential of the newer staff needs to be developed so that responsibilities can soon be shared.

Governance is very good. Governors know the school from their close involvement with its life and work, including spending time with pupils in lessons and running clubs, and they have a good knowledge of how the pupils are doing. They contribute to planning for development and have been fully involved in decisions; for instance, to employ additional staff to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The issues from the previous inspection have all been tackled effectively and the school is well placed to continue improving.

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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>	1	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>	1	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	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	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	1	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	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>	1	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>	1	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	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	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

<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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The Pupils

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

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3 March 2006

Dear Pupils

As you know, I recently visited your school to see how good it is and how well you are doing. Thank you for making me so welcome in your school. I enjoyed seeing your lessons and talking to you. I'd like to say a special thank you to the pupils who came to tell me about life at school from the pupils' point of view.

I think your school is so good that I've given it the top grade out of four.

These are the things that are especially good at your school.

The school takes excellent care of every one of you and all the adults work together to help you do your very best.

School helps you to grow up well. You learn to be responsible and very caring.

You enjoy learning and you make excellent progress and you do particularly well in English.

The teaching is outstanding. The staff expect a lot of you. Lessons are interesting and there are lots of clubs and visits. The teachers let you know how well you are doing and how you could do even better.

Your headteacher is a very, very good leader of the school.

I have asked the school to do two things to help it improve further.

Keep an even better check on your progress.

Help the new teachers to take on some of the jobs that the senior teachers do.

I hope you keep on working hard and enjoying learning.

With all best wishes for the future

Pat Kime  
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools