



# St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Marnhull

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 113825  
**LEA** Dorset  
**Inspection number** 279260  
**Inspection dates** 5 October 2005 to 5 October 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Michael Burghart RISP

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Old Mill Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Marnhull
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Sturminster Newton, Dorset DT10 1JX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01258 820417
<b>Number on roll</b>	131	<b>Fax number</b>	01258 820417
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr J Mackain-Bremner
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	9 October 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Nicola Denham

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 5 October 2005 - 5 October 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 279260
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a below average-sized primary school with seven single age classes. An average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and disabilities. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Nearly all pupils are White British and very few are in the first stages of learning English as an additional language. Children start school with slightly below average levels of attainment. The school is an Investor in People and won an Achievement Award from the Department for Education and Skills in 2003. Following criticism in the last inspection, the school went through a very unsettled period and numbers on roll dropped as a result. Much-needed stability has now been restored.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

This effective school gives good value for money. This matches the school's own view which is built on good self-evaluation. The school is well led and managed by headteacher, staff and governors, working well together. It takes good care of pupils and gives effective support to those with learning difficulties. There is good consideration of personal and academic development and a good partnership with parents and the community. However, the school knows that the assessment of pupils' achievement and the quality of pupils' annual reports could be improved. Standards are good in English and science at the end of Year 6, and satisfactory in maths. From Reception to the end of Year 6, pupils make good progress. However, this is more marked in the Foundation Stage and towards the top of the school than in Years 1 and 2 where progress is sound. Teaching is good. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum, but the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is underdeveloped. Because Foundation Stage provision is good; children reach nearly all the learning goals expected of them before joining Year 1.

The school's accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses, together with its proven track record of good progress during the unsettled period since the last inspection, indicates that its capacity to improve is good.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- In order to develop further the school should:
- ensure that pupils do as well in maths as in English and science
- improve assessment procedures and ensure that pupils' annual reports tell parents how well pupils are doing in all subjects compared with national expectations
- improve how ICT is to be used and developed in other subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good progress from slightly below average when they join Reception, to above average in English and science by the time they leave Year 6. Progress in maths has not been as strong but standards are improving and are now satisfactory. For several years, more able pupils did not do as well as they could. This has been addressed this year, with above average proportions of pupils reaching the higher levels against challenging targets, to reach good standards compared to similar schools.

Children in Reception make good progress to reach nearly all of their targets before Year 1. This good achievement is satisfactorily built upon and standards at the end of Year 2 are frequently good, especially in reading. The school's recent emphasis on writing is paying off, with marked improvement to good standards in 2005. As in Year 6, maths was the weakest area. Overall results in Year 2 were down slightly on 2004 but a higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties affected the profile.

Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties and those for whom English is a new language make good progress and do well for their ability.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is good, with strong features in moral and social education. Spiritual development is good and cultural is sound. Pupils clearly know right from wrong. They show that they can work and play happily together with many different people. The school's Catholic aims underpin its good ethos and prompt pupils' good awareness of feelings and beliefs. From Reception onwards, children are very effectively taught to share and be considerate. The school's support for various charities successfully helps pupils to think about those less fortunate than themselves.

Attendance is improved and is now average. Pupils clearly enjoy school. "I really like writing stories but I didn't use to!" was the comment of a Year 2 boy. Pupils usually behave well. They show a keen interest in lessons and much enthusiasm for visits and extra-curricular activities. Pupils especially like the way their teachers listen to them. Relationships are good. Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe and clearly feel safe. They show confidence, positive attitudes and the ability to take initiative and act responsibly. Pupils respond well to the school's commitment to healthy living and, notwithstanding the inconsistent use of ICT, are prepared in the basic skills necessary for everyday life.

Parents are very pleased with the way the school encourages their children to become mature and show independence.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good and as a result, pupils learn well for most of their time at the school. However, there are some variations in the quality of teaching and there are aspects of assessment which need to be improved. Significant recent improvements to the accommodation, including new special needs rooms which are also used for music, and new ICT suite, have strengthened teaching and enhanced learning.

In the Foundation Stage, teaching is consistently good as a result of careful planning in all areas to meet the needs of the young children. The teacher ensures there is a good balance between children learning independently through play and being directed by adults. Good assessment procedures enable children's progress to be monitored well.

Teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2, whilst currently satisfactory with positive features, have not always been as strong as in other parts of the school. Both teachers in Years 1 and 2 are very new to the school but are working closely together to provide for effective learning. In Years 3 and 6, despite considerable variation, the quality of

teaching is good overall and pupils learn well especially by the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties learn successfully as a result of carefully targeted support in the classroom and when withdrawn for additional help. Teachers and their assistants effectively establish a good learning atmosphere in lessons and set clear expectations for pupils. Pupils' positive attitudes contribute to their good learning.

Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is variable. It does not cover all subjects and lacks consistency. Where it works best, it results in work well matched to different ability groups. However, the way in which records and information are handed on to the next teacher is unreliable.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory overall with a number of strengths and two main weaknesses. In Reception, a good range of experiences is provided, fully reflecting children's needs in all areas of learning. Effective use is made of the good outdoor area to extend the range of activities. These are supported by the good deployment of teaching assistants and volunteer adults. In Years 1 to 6, teachers make sure that all the subjects of the National Curriculum are covered adequately. However, the two-year rolling programme of topics covered needs reviewing now that all pupils are taught in single age classes. There have been significant improvements in the number of computers and other ICT equipment since the last inspection, but these resources are not yet used enough to support teaching and learning in other subjects. The new ICT suite is not used to best advantage.

The very good range of extra-curricular activities includes lunchtime opportunities for pupils of all ages. Music provision in clubs and by the use of a specialist music teacher is good.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school takes good care of pupils. There is good consideration of healthy lifestyles. Procedures to ensure safety and look after those who are unwell are very effective. Because staff know pupils well, they give good guidance to show how work can be improved. Pupils are set targets which lead to good progress. However, inconsistencies in assessment have some negative effects. The school successfully encourages pupils' self-esteem. This particularly helps those with learning difficulties who frequently make good, and sometimes very good, progress. The school has begun improving the way it challenges potentially higher-attaining pupils since it recognised that they had not always achieved as much as they could. This is raising standards, especially for seven-year-olds in writing, and eleven-year-olds in English and science.

Parents are very happy with the school's care for their children. They are very pleased with teachers' approachability and day-to-day information. Parents new to the school comment on good links, whilst those who have known the school for some years are convinced that communication and care are much improved. However, pupils' annual

reports do not, as required, tell parents how well their children are doing compared with national expectations in all subjects.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher and chair of governors have successfully led the school following a period of uncertainty and turbulence. Their clear vision, and commitment towards all pupils being valued equally and achieving their best, has led to improved standards by pupils, higher morale amongst the staff team and good improvement since the last inspection. The newly appointed assistant headteacher has quickly gained a clear grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provides a good role model in the classroom.

All members of staff and the governors are well involved in the good procedures for identifying priorities for improvement. The school regularly checks all aspects of its work and changes practice as a result of the findings, for example methods of marking pupils' work and the timings of playtimes. The chair of governors leads the governing body very well. He has an excellent understanding of the school and provides a good balance of support and challenge to the senior staff. The overall quality of governance is sound with strengths in the management of finance and buildings.

The school is well placed to improve further given the effective leadership of the headteacher, the considerable improvements since the last inspection, the experience of the new assistant head, and the proactive chair of governors. Finances are very well managed and, as a result, the school gives good value for money.

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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	3	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	3	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>	3	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**

We felt really welcome in your school. You went out of your way to talk to us about your work and what you like about St Mary's. We think your behaviour and manners are good and a credit to the school.

Yours is an effective school with lots to be pleased with. Here are some of the highlights:

standards of reading, writing and science are good

your teachers and their assistants are good at teaching; they take good care of you and help you to make progress, especially those of you who find learning difficult

the school is well run by the headteacher and the chair of governors

the school is good at helping you to stay safe and healthy

there are good links with your parents, the church and the local community

the school helps you to grow into sensible people.

Here are three important things which will make the school even better:

ensuring you do as well in maths as you do in English and science

improving how teachers measure how well you are doing, and how they share this with your parents in your reports

making more use of the new ICT suite and resources in your work in other subjects.

Thank you for your part in the inspection. I wish you all the best for the future.