



St Mary Magdalen Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114541
LEA Brighton and Hove
Inspection number 279408
Inspection dates 6 December 2005 to 7 December 2005
Reporting inspector Linda Kelsey HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Spring Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Brighton
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		East Sussex BN1 3EF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01273 327533
Number on roll	220	Fax number	01273 327259
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Fiona Wookey
Date of previous inspection	20 September 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Halden Eady

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Mary Magdalen Catholic Primary School is situated in the centre of Brighton and serves a wide and diverse community. It has an increasing number of pupils coming from deprived backgrounds as well as multicultural faiths. Mobility of pupils moving in and out of the area in a short time is a key feature of the school. There are an above average number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities as well as language and communication problems.

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 which provides an effective quality of education. The school has evaluated itself well and knows its strengths and weaknesses. Pupils are making good progress from low starting points. This is because senior staff has high expectations of pupils and teachers. There are effective systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning, so the self-evaluation is outstanding. All members of staff are aware of the priorities and share good practice with each other. Performance management procedures are systematic and thorough. All members of staff have targets for improvement and, as a result, teaching is good. These are currently focused on developing the teaching of mathematics teaching to improve standards. There is a real understanding of what needs to be done to bring about further improvement, such as improving the time given for pupils to develop their independence in problem-solving. The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are excellent and the care guidance and support for all pupils are excellent. The school's capacity to improve is good and as a result, the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- The structure of mathematics lessons so that enough time is given for pupils to develop their independence in problem solving.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall and has been improving year by year since 2003. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Key Stage 2, standards are above average in English and science. Standards are lower in mathematics and, although average overall by the end of Key Stage 2, they are below average by the end of Key Stage 1. Not enough focus has been given to developing pupils' investigation skills and not enough pupils reach the higher levels of attainment in mathematics, by the end of Year 6.

Pupils start school with well below average levels of attainment and they make good progress throughout the school. They have good opportunities through their topic work to practise and use their literacy skills. The Indian sub-continent, the Romans and the Great Fire of London are all good examples of where topic work has made a difference to the progress pupils make because the curriculum is exciting. In physical development the youngest pupils are encouraged to demonstrate their work and talk about what they have learned. All pupils are developing a wide range of skills, in particular in information and communication technology, as they move through the school.

The high numbers of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, and with English as an additional language, also make good progress. This is because their work is carefully planned and supported when in class through accurate assessment data. As a result, they are fully integrated into all activities and a good proportion of them

reach the national average levels. Challenging targets have been exceeded in the last two years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of all pupils is good because they know that teachers understand them well. Pupils enjoy their lessons and work hard. Relationships in the school are good and pupils treat each other and the staff with respect and courtesy. They are given responsibility to look after each other, including those new to the school, by being "buddies". They feel safe, secure and free from bullying but know what they should do if they are worried or concerned about anything.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. It is underpinned by the Christian values of the school. Pupils know right from wrong, understand other cultures and religions and appreciate art, music and dance. They have a good understanding of the importance of living healthy lifestyles and take part in regular physical activities in school time and at after-school clubs. The use of the interactive whiteboard is developing their skills to help ensure their future economic well-being. Pupils enjoy making a good contribution to the local community by fundraising and giving donations to local homeless groups. They also sing carols at the local old people's home at Christmas. The school has taken positive steps to improve attendance, which is now average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good overall, with very good teaching seen in the Foundation Stage. All lessons are consistently well planned. Teachers skilfully build on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. They actively encourage pupils to answer and 'have a go', valuing their comments. As a result of this good teaching, pupils are making good progress in lessons. Teachers' assistants make a very effective contribution to pupils' learning when leading group work and supporting individuals with language, or learning difficulties or disabilities. Teachers clearly explain what the lesson is going to be about. Pupils say they know what they are doing in class and understand what the target is for them. Resources are always well prepared for them and are used very effectively. Teachers use interactive white boards well to interest and stimulate learning. They encourage pupils to talk so that their key vocabulary is consolidated and good attention is given to writing in smaller group activities. In books there is evidence of a good volume and range of work being covered in all subjects.

Work is well marked and pupils' achievement is celebrated by stickers and praise. There are rigorous systems to assess how well pupils are doing and teachers use these effectively to plan next steps in learning. Mobility of pupils, learning difficulties or disabilities and language acquisition skills are all noted in pupils' records and good

support is given to them. As a result they make equally good progress from their starting points.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school judges the curriculum it provides as satisfactory but it is better than this because it offers more than is statutorily required and meets the needs of all the pupils, whatever their backgrounds, effectively. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well catered for and additional support is planned in literacy and numeracy when pupils need it.

Good provision is made for bilingual learners and those who are at the early stages of speaking English. Bilingual support assistants work skilfully with class teachers so that pupils are fully included in all activities, and good use is made of external agencies to develop links with parents.

There is a good range of after-school clubs which are well attended, including homework club on four evenings a week. Pupils are given many opportunities for practical experiences such as using puppets, dressing up and cooking. ICT and literacy skills are used well in other subjects.

The provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding because the teachers and support staff deliver a well planned curriculum matched to the needs of the pupils, many who start school with very little English. Clear daily routines help those just beginning school to settle in quickly and feel safe and secure.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding and parents are confident that their children are cared for while at school. The arrangements for ensuring all pupils are safe are in place. Pupils are well supported in class and their individual needs are met through regularly assessments both personally and academically from the time they start school. From this information the school builds realistic but challenging targets for the pupils. These are shared and celebrated when achieved. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own work and comment when they find things difficult.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school which is focused on raising standards for all pupils. She has built a strong leadership team which shares her high expectations of staff and pupils. Together they have honestly and accurately identified strengths and weaknesses and developed a good plan for improvement. All members of staff are involved in the monitoring of teaching and learning which is rigorous and systematic. Information from this and data about how well pupils are doing are used effectively to judge whether actions taken

for improvement have been successful. Performance management is used effectively to support staff in achieving targets and has helped to build a strong team where everyone works well together so that pupils make good progress. Time is given for staff to plan their work although teachers who are covering lessons are not sufficiently involved in designing them so pupils do not work as hard as they could.

The governors are knowledgeable and have a good understanding of what the school does well and how it can be improved further. They challenge as well as support the headteacher effectively and have clear ideas about how they can continue to improve the way they work with the school and its parents.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school is well placed to continue to improve further.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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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	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	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

St Mary Magdalen Catholic Primary School Spring Street Brighton East Sussex BN1 3EF

8 December 2005

Dear pupils

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly during our visit to your school. All the inspectors enjoyed our visit, looking at your work and seeing your lessons. We especially liked chatting with so many of you.

What we liked most about your school:

- we think you are all doing so well at school and that you work very hard for your teachers
- you know how to behave well around the school
- we think this is a very happy school, your teachers and the adults take very good care of you and make sure that you feel safe and secure
- you have some very interesting work to do at school and your teachers get you extra support if you find things difficult
- you also know what is good to eat and why you should do some exercise while at school
- your headteacher is good at knowing how she can make things even better for you.

What we have asked your headteacher and her staff to think about:

- we think that some of you are ready to work on your own more during practical activities in mathematics so that you can get even better at this subject.

We hope that you continue to do well, help your teachers and the adults in your school and would like to wish you success in your future education.

Linda Kelsey HMI