



St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101537
Local Authority Brent
Inspection number 286103
Inspection dates 21–22 November 2006
Reporting inspector Barry Jones

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Garnet Road
School category	Voluntary aided		London
Age range of pupils	3–11		NW10 9JA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02084510363
Number on roll (school)	313	Fax number	02084515630
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Father David Clues
		Headteacher	Ms Susan Lawrence
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	21–22 November 2006	286103

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's serves a largely disadvantaged, inner-city area. Almost all the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. A higher proportion of pupils do not have English as their home language, than is found in the great majority of schools. Attainment on entry to the school was well below average for pupils who joined the school before 2003. The intake is changing and there are now more pupils from Eastern European countries and some of these speak no English on arrival. Attainment on entry has improved but is still below average. All the classes in Years 1 to 6 comprise pupils from two age groups. There is a breakfast and an after-school club.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Mary's is a good school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This reflects both the Christian ethos and the school's very positive response to the rich cultural diversity of its pupils. This is a harmonious community in which pupils show respect and a good understanding of other cultures and beliefs. Since the last inspection there has been a determined drive to improve behaviour. This has been successful. Behaviour is now good and pupils contribute well to the orderly community and calm atmospheres within classrooms. As a result of the caring environment and the hard work of staff pupils are safe, enjoy school and achieve well.

Children receive a good start in the Nursery and make good progress. Teaching in Reception is good and has improved since the last inspection. Together with improvements to the curriculum, the quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are good. By the end of Year 6, pupils attain standards which are broadly average. Given their starting points, this means that pupils' achievement is good. There are no underachieving groups, but there is some variation within this positive picture. Pupils make better progress more consistently in English and science than in mathematics in Key Stage 2. This is partly due to the high priority given to promoting literacy through extra support and resources. There is a very practical approach to teaching science, and this has benefited the pupils. In mathematics, more able pupils do well but a few pupils of average ability and some Black Caribbean pupils do not do as well as they should in Key Stage 2. This is because teachers do not plan work sufficiently well to cater for all abilities within the mixed-age classes, all of which contain a wide spread of ability. In most subjects, the curriculum is planned on a two year cycle. This means that there is not repetition for pupils who spend two years in one class. The curriculum in mathematics is less well planned and does not ensure a progression of ideas and increasing difficulty for all pupils from one year to the next.

The quality of care and support are good and links with other organisations are effective. This means that vulnerable pupils develop socially, achieve well and can play their full part in the life of the school. Pupils who arrive with little English also receive well-targeted support and improve their language skills. Their progress in their other subjects is slower in Key Stage 1, but accelerates in Key Stage 2 and they too achieve well overall.

The rising standards in the school are due to the good teaching and learning and the strong leadership and management. The headteacher and her deputy are good role models, and they are ably assisted by the assistant headteacher, subject coordinators and pastoral leaders. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in raising attainment, improving behaviour, the provision in the Foundation Stage and the curriculum, which is now satisfactory. It has not been successful in improving attendance and punctuality and these continue to be unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, the school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and, given its track record, the school has good capacity to further improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Improve planning in mathematics to ensure that work given to pupils is challenging and well matched to the needs of individual pupils.
- Work with parents more closely to raise attendance and to improve punctuality.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average in all subjects. However, pupils consistently attain higher in English and science than they do in mathematics. The school has received extra resources, advisory support and participated successfully in several initiatives aimed at raising literacy levels. These have been more successful in improving standards of reading than writing. Standards in science have improved significantly. The attention given to developing practical skills and special events such as 'science week', have contributed to pupils' enjoyment in this subject and to their good achievement. Consequently, the school has met challenging targets for English and science but missed its target for mathematics.

Pupils' progress in the school is good, but is not even through the school. The best teaching and progress by pupils has been in the Nursery and in Years 5 and 6. In recent years, there were some weaknesses in the teaching in the Reception and in Key Stage 1 and consequently some pupils did not make the progress they should have and standards have been below average. The school has improved teaching through a rigorous monitoring programme which has been linked well to the professional development of teachers. As a result, most pupils now make good progress in these classes too and standards are rising.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Infant pupils were fully involved in an assembly. There was good use of role play and most pupils developed their understanding of what 'exclusion' means and the importance of being members of a community. Pupils' positive attitudes are directly linked to the quality of support and teaching they receive. As one pupil said, 'Lessons are interesting. The teachers make them fun and so we learn'. It also means that they are motivated to make a good contribution to the community. The school council feels that its views are valued. It has been able to influence decisions about healthy eating, the frequency of school trips, the quality of the toilets and the use of the junior playground. Some of these pupils were able to represent pupils' views to the governors. Pupils generally show a good understanding of healthy-living issues. An anti-bullying week was taking place during the inspection visit and the children responded well to this. They know how to report the small amount of bullying when it occurs and are confident that it would be resolved. The school is using a number of strategies to raise levels of attendance but they are not effective and rates remain below average.

Punctuality at the start of the school day is unsatisfactory. This also means that pupils' preparation for later life is only satisfactory despite the good progress they make in literacy. Hence, pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory overall.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have good subject knowledge, use questioning well to help pupils clarify their thinking and use resources effectively. They manage their classes well. Their enthusiasm is transmitted to the pupils and consequently learning is fun for many pupils. In an outstanding geography lesson, infants collaborated well to design a travel survey for journeys to school. The learning objectives were clear and were modified for pupils of different abilities. The teacher checked that all pupils understood and helped them to further develop their ideas. Consequently, the pupils enjoyed the lesson very much and made excellent progress. Generally, teachers do plan to cater for different abilities but with varying degrees of success within the mixed-age groups. As a result, some pupils find the work set for them is sometimes not challenging. Teaching assistants give good quality help to pupils individually and in groups and they learn well. Parents of the younger children are given useful guidance on how they can help their children at home.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has several strengths. In the Foundation Stage there is a good balance between teacher-led activities and opportunities for the children to learn independently. There is good provision for literacy and for promoting pupils' personal development throughout the school. The curriculum takes good account of the wide range of backgrounds of the pupils. Information and communication technology resources have been improved and pupils use these well for a good range of applications. The school is just developing modern foreign languages. There is a good range of clubs and visits and there is a good take up for these. Artists work in the school and this initiative enhances the quality of pupils' work and helps to develop their appreciation of art. The curriculum is satisfactory overall because it does not always meet the needs of all pupils in mixed-age classes. This is the case in mathematics particularly.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, support and guidance for its pupils. The commitment of staff to health and safety, the effective child protection arrangements and the thorough risk assessments ensure that pupils are safe while they are at school. However, some pupils say they do not always feel safe on the junior playground because of where it is situated. The school is doing what it can to address the problem and funding

has been negotiated. However, progress is hampered by the lack of agreement over a new location for the playground. Pupils' needs are quickly identified and effective support is put in place, particularly for those with emotional or behavioural difficulties. There is a counselling service for pupils on site and this is used well. This leads to improvements in their learning and therefore in the progress they make. Outside agencies make a significant contribution to the care, support and guidance of the pupils who join the school with little or no English. These pupils make rapid progress and quickly become fully included in all the school does. Pupils know what they have to do to improve, but the tracking of their progress within the mixed-age groups is not yet well established.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior managers have been successful in raising standards and promoting a high quality of care. They have cultivated a climate in the school in which other staff are encouraged to take responsibility and to take initiative. For instance, middle managers carry out their roles effectively by supporting other teachers and monitoring their areas of responsibility well. Strong teamwork is a feature of the school. Teaching assistants are well deployed and contribute significantly to the progress made by vulnerable pupils. They have a good range of expertise that they share effectively through frequent meetings. The monitoring of teaching is thorough and has led to improvements in the teaching. Senior managers have taken robust action when weaknesses in teaching have been identified. However, there is insufficient emphasis in lesson observations on the progress made by pupils. The school makes very effective use of data available through a range of sources. It acts very promptly and effectively when an individual is identified as underachieving. It has recently begun using computers to help with tracking the progress of pupils. Consequently, it is only now analysing data for patterns of performance by particular groups of pupils. This has revealed the slow progress made in mathematics by pupils in some classes during their second year in that class. Governors are supportive of the school but it experiences difficulties in recruiting its full complement.

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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?	2
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	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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	3
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

Thank you for your help when we visited your school. You were most polite and courteous and were good ambassadors for your school. You like St Mary's and it is easy for us to see why that is. You say the teachers make lessons interesting and fun. Together with the many clubs on offer this means that you enjoy school. The school council works well on your behalf. They told us how they have been able to help to improve school dinners, school trips and what they have done to represent your views concerning the junior playground. Several of you explained to us that because it is apart from the main school site, there are times when some of you do not feel safe. You are safe because the school makes sure of that.

Our main finding is that St Mary's is a good school.

- You behave well and come to school ready to learn.
- You respect one another's beliefs and cultures.
- You do well in English and science, including those of you who are still learning English when you join the school.
- You are taught well.
- The school is very caring and you get good support if you fall behind in your work.
- The school is well led and the staff work well as a team.

There are three things that we have asked the school to do so that you do even better. We are asking the teachers to plan work in mathematics that is challenging and so that you can do as well in mathematics as you do in English and science. We also think that some of you do not attend school as frequently as you should and too many of you are late for school in the morning. Your parents and carers have an important part to play in putting this right. Most of all it is up to you. The school is a good place to be and so do not miss it.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Barry Jones

Lead inspector