

St Mary's RC Primary School , Chiswick

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102529
Local Authority	Hounslow
Inspection number	286413
Inspection date	16 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Mike Thompson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Twomey
Headteacher	Ms Theresa McManus
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2002
School address	Duke Road Chiswick London W4 2DF
Telephone number	020 8994 5606
Fax number	020 8742 7630

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Mary's is a one-form entry primary school situated in a residential area of the London Borough of Hounslow. It draws its pupils from a wide catchment area. Their home circumstances are much more favourable than average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is about twice the national average. One of the largest of these groups is that of pupils with Italian heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about half the national average. A new headteacher took up her post in September 2006.

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 Primary is a good school with a number of outstanding features. Many of these relate to the high quality of the school's provision for promoting the personal development of its pupils. After a period of uncertainty during the year taken to appoint a new headteacher in 2006, the school is now making rapid progress improving all aspects of its provision.

The parents hold this school in high regard. A good proportion of the parents returned the inspection questionnaires, and these were extremely positive in almost all areas surveyed. Many included positive comments, one of which sums up the views expressed in many others: 'Going to St Mary's is like going home. Children love the warm family atmosphere.'

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are given a good start to their education. When children begin school at the age of three their attainment is above what is normally expected at this age. The school successfully builds on this good start and ensures that pupils achieve well and make good progress in all year groups. This is because pupils are taught well and the excellent curriculum provides them with a very wide range of interesting and exciting activities. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6 their attainment is consistently well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. The school's high expectations for all of its pupils in all areas of learning are evident, for example, in the excellent standard of singing.

A key factor in the school's success is the excellent climate for learning in all classes. This stems from the outstanding personal development of the pupils. They behave exceptionally well in lessons, and show a real desire to learn.

St Mary's is a school in which every individual child really does matter. The pupils are warmly welcomed and equally valued. The school's good provision for the care, guidance and support of its pupils ensures that they feel secure. Within this provision, the quality of pastoral care is outstanding. The school provides good academic guidance for its pupils because the teachers know their pupils well. There is a clear system for checking on what individual pupils know and can do. This is relatively new, and the school recognises that now needs to be developed. Currently it does not provide an overview of each pupil's progress from the Foundation Stage through to Year 6, nor does it incorporate the full range of subjects taught.

The driving force behind the school's success is its good leadership and management. In particular, the headteacher and her deputy make an excellent team and provide outstanding direction for the work of the school. At present, too much of the responsibility for monitoring the day-to-day work of the school rests with the senior managers. They realise that they have to share this workload and develop the leadership skills of teaching staff with responsibility as curriculum coordinators. This will help broaden the monitoring of pupils' achievement to include all subject areas.

The school has made sound progress in addressing the single issue for improvement from its last inspection. Work to improve the outdoor provision for the Foundation Stage was delayed by the change in leadership, but this issue is now being tackled. The school is now very well placed to move forward on all fronts.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine systems for tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school.
- Develop the leadership and management skills of curriculum coordinators.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are high in all classes. The school's performance in the annual assessments in Year 2 and Year 6 is consistently well above the national average. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in maintaining high levels of attainment. This level of performance stems from the culture for learning and the good teaching that are features in all classes.

Boys and girls achieve equally well. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because they are given good quality help in meeting their targets. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve just as well as pupils of White British heritage.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins all aspects of school life. Particularly noteworthy is the excellent social development of pupils. The work of the school council not only gives pupils first-hand experiences of democracy in action but also enables them to help enhance the facilities that the school has to offer. For example, following representations by school council representatives, blinds have been provided in all rooms and there have been improvements in the playground equipment provided for pupils.

Pupils are bright and articulate, and extremely proud of the school. Relationships throughout the school are excellent, and pupils are generally exceptionally well behaved. One pupil commented, 'I really like the way that everyone makes you feel welcome.' The pupils also feel happy that the very rare instances of bullying are quickly and sensitively dealt with.

Attendance rates are consistently well above the national average and illustrate pupils' exceptionally positive attitudes towards their school. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next phase of their education and for a future as life-long learners. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles, a good awareness of how to keep safe, and have high levels of competence in basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Some of the teaching observed was of the highest quality. Particularly noteworthy features of lessons are the attention and enjoyment shown by all pupils. This is because teachers plan carefully to make their lessons interesting. They know their pupils' learning needs very well. As a result, they generally pitch work at different levels or present it in different ways so that pupils of all abilities are given achievable challenges. However, this is not always the case and some pupils commented that they found the work provided did not always make them think hard.

Teachers are good at helping their pupils focus on what is required of them by setting out clear success criteria for what is to be learned and sharing these with their pupils. Teachers are also good at giving very clear explanations to their pupils. As a result, pupils set to work quickly and without fuss because they know precisely what they have to do. On occasions when teachers' introductions to lessons are too long, pupils can become restless and inattentive.

Where needed, skilled teaching assistants work very effectively with individuals or groups of pupils with specific needs.

A small number of parents expressed concerns about the quality of homework provided. However, pupils say that it is often interesting and challenging. One commented, 'I'm happy to do it. It is hard, but it makes you more intelligent!' A scrutiny of homework books showed that it is generally well matched to pupils' abilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is very well planned to ensure that pupils have a wide range of interesting experiences.

The Foundation Stage curriculum acknowledges the way in which young children learn. There are very good opportunities for children in the Nursery to make sensible choices of activities and also to work on tasks directed by adults. In the Nursery, excellent use is made of the spacious premises and good levels of staffing to ensure that children are given the very best start possible. During the morning session, children in the Reception class do not have easy access to the full range of equipment available because of difficulties presented by the lay-out of the accommodation. However, the school compensates for this as well as it can by accommodating the Reception children in the empty Nursery classroom during the afternoon sessions. While this is an unsatisfactory situation, the school has ensured that it does not adversely affect children's learning. The delayed project to improve the outdoor learning area is now underway.

An outstanding feature of the curriculum is the emphasis placed on music, and many pupils receive either individual or small group tuition in a wide range of musical instruments. The school is good at promoting the cultural traditions of its pupils, for example through the Italian club. The school ensures that visits to places of interest or visitors to the school add interest and enjoyment to pupils' learning.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are given clear educational direction through their individual education plans.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The procedures to ensure pupils' safety and well-being are rigorous. Effective health and safety and child protection arrangements are regularly reviewed. A particularly noteworthy feature of the school's provision is its promotion of healthy lifestyles. For example, the success of the school's travel plan is seen in the significant increase in the proportion of older pupils who now cycle each day.

The quality of academic guidance given to pupils is good. Day-to-day assessment is used well to check on how pupils are progressing in lessons. The newly developed system for tracking the progress made by pupils is providing senior managers with a good overview of how well pupils are getting on in each class. This enables teachers to set clear targets for pupils to achieve. However, it does not yet provide managers with information about how well pupils are progressing across the range of subjects taught. This is because assessment systems in many foundation subjects are not yet robust enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The impact of leadership is seen in the good progress made by the pupils. The new headteacher already knows the school well. She and her deputy work well in close partnership and make good use of information gathered from regular monitoring of teaching to guide the school's development. However, the leadership acknowledges that its tracking systems require further refinement.

At present most monitoring is carried out by the headteacher and deputy. This is because many staff lack experience and training in working as subject coordinators and having responsibility for leading aspects of the school's work.

Governance is good. Governors carefully monitor the work of the school, know it very well, and are good at holding it to account. An excellent feature of governance is the way in which governors ensured the smooth running of the school and the maintenance of high academic standards during the year in which the school had no permanent headteacher. The excellent deputy headteacher had a strong role to play in providing continuity and direction during this period.

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Annex A

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	1
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	1
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	1
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	1

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?	1
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.

Annex A

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

25 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's RC Primary School ,Chiswick,London,W4 2DF

Thank you for helping me so much when I came to inspect your school to find out how well you are getting on. I particularly enjoyed looking at your work and talking to some of you.

I agree with your parents that you go to a good school.

There is so much I like about your school that I can't mention everything, so here is a list of what I think are the most important things.

- You do well in your work, and when you leave school at the end of Year 6 your results are always better than those of most other schools. You should be very proud of this.
- Everyone in your school is friendly and welcoming. Your behaviour is usually excellent and you get on really well with each other.
- You learn a lot in lessons because the teaching you are given is good.
- Your teachers are good at planning lots of interesting things for you to do.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are really well looked after.
- All the people who help run your school do a good job in making sure that you get a good education.

I would also like to let you know that I really enjoyed hearing you sing in assembly.

Even in a good school like yours there is always something that could be even better. So, I think that what needs to be done next is for the school to improve the way in which it checks on your progress. This will help the teachers to see exactly how well you are getting on in each subject. I would also like all your teachers to learn about how to be in charge of different subjects. This will help your headteacher and deputy, because they already have a great deal to do.

I am sure that you will continue to have great success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Mike Thompson. Lead Inspector