



# St Mary's RC Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 103843  
**Local Authority** Dudley  
**Inspection number** 286784  
**Inspection dates** 4–5 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Jacqueline Wordsworth HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Mill Street
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Brierley Hill
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		DY5 2TH
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01384 818435
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	179	<b>Fax number</b>	01384 818436
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	John Darley
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Anne Maher
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 May 2002		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
4–11	4–5 October 2006	286784

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

The pupils of St Mary's Catholic Primary School come from diverse socio- economic backgrounds, including a number of children from travelling families. There are 22% of pupils who have learning difficulties and 18% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. Eight per cent of pupils are learning English as an additional language. These figures are broadly in line with the national averages. A new senior leadership team has been in place since 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 provides a good quality education. Drawing on a strong Christian ethos, the children quickly learn right from wrong and so their behaviour and relationships with each other are excellent. There is a real family atmosphere, with each child included and valued. The provision for spiritual, moral and social development is good, with pupils given good help to reflect on rights and wrongs and respect for others. The pupils make a good contribution to their school and the local community, initiating charitable collections for a number of good causes.

Achievement is good. Effective leadership in the Foundation Stage promotes good progress, with standards by the end of the Reception Year that are generally at the level expected for the pupils' age. By the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils are reaching the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics and some are exceeding these. Thereafter, most children in Years 3 to 6 continue to achieve well and reach above average standards because the quality of teaching and learning is effective.

The teachers provide relevant experiences, which not only capture the children's imagination but also clearly motivate them to strive harder for success. Teachers have a clear understanding of the standards that children should be reaching and have high expectations of their performance. They use a good range of systems for measuring and tracking children's progress and attainment, and identifying quickly any underachievement.

Assessment information is frequently analysed to judge how well children are learning. Effective intervention and appropriate support is swiftly provided to tackle any underachievement. The pupils with learning difficulties do well because of effective provision. The school's evaluation of achievement and standards is used to set whole school priorities for further improvement. For example, the school has accurately identified that the pupils did not achieve as well as they could in writing because there were insufficient opportunities for them to write at length. This forms part of the school's current improvement plan.

The recent appointment of two assistant headteachers has significantly strengthened the senior leadership of the school. They have clear roles and responsibilities and have an accurate understanding of what needs to be done to improve standards across the school. They provide good role models for other staff to emulate. In the short time since their appointment, they have carried out lesson observations, scrutinised teachers' planning, and monitored children's work. Subject leaders also know what is working well in their subject area and what needs developing.

Literacy and numeracy targets have been set for groups of pupils and these are displayed in the pupils' books. However, there is little linkage between these targets and the intended learning identified for future lessons. Sometimes, marking is not completed often enough; furthermore, it rarely refers explicitly to pupils' targets and generally does not indicate what the pupils need to do to improve.

The curriculum meets basic statutory requirements, but there is considerable imbalance between subjects. In too many classes, literacy and numeracy lessons are overlong and dominate the timetable leaving insufficient time for other subjects.

The school's commitment to inclusion is clear in the way pupils from minority ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are fully engaged in all school activities. However, the school does not make sure that all staff are fully aware of how to meet the specific linguistic needs of pupils who are learning English as an additional language.

The programme for pupils' personal development provides a firm foundation for them to develop a sense of self and what it means to be part of a community. The pupils feel safe and secure because of effective procedures and policies for dealing with racism and bullying, so that they feel confident that there are adults they can turn to if they need help. This has a positive impact on the pupils' attitudes and underpins their personal development effectively. The pupils' good attitudes and positive social skills, including a keen awareness of others, stand them in good stead for their future economic well-being. As a result, they are on course to become responsible citizens.

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

- Ensure that the specific linguistic needs of all pupils who are learning English as an additional language are met by providing relevant training for all staff.
- Ensure that lessons are not overlong and that subjects other than English and mathematics are given more prominence.
- Match pupils' individual targets for improvement more closely to their individual needs and ensure that group targets link better to the work that is planned.
- Ensure that marking is completed regularly, is evaluative, and enables pupils to know how to improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The positive and inclusive ethos effectively contributes to children's good achievement with all groups of children making good progress. The school sets challenging targets for learners. However, the number of pupils attaining the higher levels varies from year to year, because there are comparatively small numbers of pupils, and ability levels are different in different year groups. For example, the number of pupils reaching the highest possible level in writing fell back in 2006. Nevertheless, pupils in the 2006 cohort made good progress from their starting points. The school keeps a watchful eye on children's academic progress and personal development.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The school successfully promotes the pupils' personal development and well-being. Most pupils attend regularly and enjoy school. Absence rates fall slightly below the

national average but they have improved considerably since the last inspection as a result of effective monitoring procedures introduced by the school. Children show an informed awareness of their own cultural traditions, and have a sound knowledge of others'. An active school council makes a very good contribution to school life; those involved are proud to explain how their ideas have led to improvements in many areas. All of this, combined with their good progress in literacy and numeracy by the age of 11, ensures that they are well prepared for their next stage of education. All children understand the importance of healthy eating and the benefits of regular exercise; many attend the 'Fitness Friday' session in addition to their regular physical education lesson. The school also runs a 'Get Moving' programme to enable pupils to develop their fine motor skills.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good and the children make good progress in their learning. Strengths in teaching are the very positive relationships that staff have with the children and their effective use of regular praise and encouragement to motivate them. Teachers' subject knowledge is often good and they use this well to provide suitably structured activities with a brisk pace. Different tasks are skilfully used to help pupils achieve well, whatever their ability or previous attainment. At the start of lessons, teachers effectively explain what pupils will learn. However, teachers do not always make best use of the end of lessons to challenge and extend pupils' thinking and this restricts their learning. Too often, pupils are asked merely to outline what they have completed in the lesson. Pupils, therefore, are not able to build on skills that they have acquired during the lesson.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is broad and provides sound opportunities for pupils to achieve well. Nevertheless, some lessons last well over an hour and are far too long for pupils to sustain their concentration and this constrains their learning. Subjects other than English and mathematics do not receive as much curriculum time; for example music is 30 minutes per week, also physical education has one and half hours allocation.

A range of visits and visitors aims to make learning enjoyable and relevant to everyday life. The school has a register of pupils with particular gifts and talents and is currently developing alternative curricular opportunities for these pupils.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils have strong and trusting relationships with adults. These support learning and personal development very well. The pupils are clear and confident about whom they

can turn to for help. Many parents wrote complimentary remarks in the questionnaire showing appreciation for the high level of support and care their children receive from the school. Procedures for child protection are robust and the school works very well with outside agencies. This ensures that vulnerable pupils, including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, are well supported.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. There are some examples of target setting and careful marking, but these are inconsistent across the school and therefore not all pupils are sufficiently aware of how to take the next steps in their learning. The guidance for pupils who are learning English as an additional language is over reliant on outside agencies; therefore the pupils do not receive the support needed on a daily basis because the expertise does not yet exist within the school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management are good. All leaders make sure pupils are happy and enjoy school and this has a strong influence on raising standards and demonstrates that the school has strong capacity to continue improving. Parents have a high regard for the school and value all it has to offer their children. The headteacher successfully delegates management responsibility to teachers and has established a strong leadership team. Self-evaluation is of a good quality and enables the school to plan its priorities efficiently. Senior managers and leaders of subjects regularly observe their colleagues and give feedback on the quality of teaching. This helpful and constructive monitoring of lessons has led directly to improvement in teaching. The governing body provides good support and challenge to the school. They spend a lot of time in school, which gives them a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses.





## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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	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**

Thank you very much for being so welcoming and friendly towards me during my recent visit to your school. I very much enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you and your teachers about how well you are doing. I thought you would like to know what I have said about your school, which I think is a good school.

You behave very well and you are kind and considerate to each other. In lessons, you listen carefully to what your teachers have to tell you and you try hard. You really enjoy coming to school and have many things to look forward to such as visits, visitors and clubs. You told me that you feel safe in school and that any falling out is quickly sorted out by the teachers. You told me about how you raise lots of money for charity and how the playground buddies are helping to make sure that the younger pupils enjoy their playtimes.

Your teachers look after you well and listen to what you have to say. They work hard to help you learn. It was a pleasure to see that some of you have had your work published in a book of poetry. This is a real achievement – well done!

I have made some suggestions to help the school get even better. I have asked your teachers to look again at the school timetables to see if more time can be found for other subjects such as history, geography and PE by making some of your lessons shorter. I have also asked your teachers to think about how they can give better support in lessons to those of you who are learning English as an additional language. When you have completed a piece of work, I would like your teachers to write in your books how you could make it even better and set you a target to work towards.

Many things are good about your school and you, together with your teachers, can make it even better. Please keep working hard and doing the best you can. I wish you well in the future.