



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106240
Local Authority Tameside
Inspection number 287454
Inspection dates 4–5 December 2006
Reporting inspector Arthur Markham

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Type of school | Primary | School address | Ceetham Hill Road |
| School category | Voluntary aided | | Dukinfield |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 | | Cheshire SK16 5LD |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 0161 3684824 |
| Number on roll (school) | 198 | Fax number | 0161 3684824 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Fr O O'Doherty |
| | | Headteacher | Mrs P Blake |
| Date of previous school inspection | 21 January 2002 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school serves a diverse area with many pupils travelling some distance to attend. Most pupils are of White British heritage with a small number from minority ethnic groups. Few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The number of pupils claiming free school meals is slightly below average, as is the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although the school does take in an above average number of children with complex needs.

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 with some outstanding features. Parents rate it highly and appreciate the high level of care taken of their children, saying they are always happy to go to school. The care, guidance and support for pupils and their personal development are outstanding. Pupils say they like school and enjoy their learning because the teachers are friendly and kind. They respond to the very positive relationships by being polite and courteous. Their behaviour is exemplary. The strong emphasis placed on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development helps them become confident and self-assured so that they develop into effective learners with very good attitudes to school. They take on responsibilities eagerly and express their views clearly through the work of the school council. Older pupils play an active role in caring for younger pupils through their work in the 'family groups'. Their collections for a range of charities reflect their care and concern for others. Pupils show increasing maturity as they move up the school and by the time they leave Year 6 are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.

The strong leadership of the headteacher ensures that close attention is given to enabling pupils of all abilities to achieve well and reach standards that are above average by the end of Year 6. She is well supported by staff who share her determination to raise standards. The overall quality of teaching is good, although there is some variation across classes. Occasionally, teachers do not ensure that pupils understand what they have to do and fail to give pupils long enough to complete their work. The quality of provision in the Reception class is good and children quickly develop effective learning habits. By the time they enter Year 1, most achieve the standards expected nationally, although few exceed them. In Years 1 and 2, good and sometimes outstanding teaching enables pupils to reach above average standards overall, although again few reach the higher level. The school is rightly proud of its reputation for giving very good support to those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, it takes in an increasing number of these pupils during Years 3 to 6, which has an adverse impact on national test results, but the school works hard to overcome this. Effective use of assessment information enables the planning of work to meet pupils' differing needs. Target-setting enables pupils to understand what they must do to improve and teachers generally explain things clearly so that they achieve them. Consequently over the last few years, standards have successfully been maintained at a level slightly above national averages.

The headteacher, committed governors and staff all work hard to improve the quality of education provided for pupils. Very strong links with the community and a wide range of providers enrich provision for pupils. Self-evaluation accurately identifies the areas needing development, although the school has been modest in its judgement of how well it cares for pupils. Subject coordinators have an enthusiastic approach to managing their subjects, but their monitoring role is not well developed. Finances are well managed and the school provides good value for money. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the capacity for further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching to that of the best so that pupils make consistently good progress throughout the school.
- Develop the role of subject leaders to enable them to take a more active role in improving standards in their areas of responsibilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. On entry to the school children's skills cover a wide range of ability, but overall are below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Reception class because well organised routines and stimulating activities develop good learning habits. Most children reach the standards expected nationally by the time they enter Year 1, but few exceed them. In Years 1 and 2, close attention is given to developing pupils' basic skills so that by the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. The school has a reputation for succeeding with pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and as a result, a number transfer to the school during Years 3 to 6. This has an adverse effect on test results. However, effective teaching and well targeted use of support staff ensure that these pupils make good progress. Consequently, standards in national tests at Year 6 have been maintained at a level slightly above national averages during the last few years. In 2006 there was a marked improvement in results in mathematics and science, mainly because the proportion of pupils achieving at the higher levels improved, although results in English dipped slightly. The standards being attained by the present pupils are similarly above national averages.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils really enjoy school as indicated by their good attendance. They say that school is a happy, friendly place where staff help them and make lessons interesting and fun. As they mature pupils take responsibility for others, by becoming a much admired buddy, play leader or member of a mixed-age 'family group'. Through the thriving school council they have contributed ideas for consideration in the new school building. Such experiences develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness exceptionally well. Behaviour is excellent. The good relationships that pupils form with each other and with adults develop an eagerness in them to always do their best. They know how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They are involved in the wider community through their strong links with St Mary's Parish, carol singing for older people, and links with the local special school and nursery. Pupils' personal skills and attributes are developed exceptionally well, which will help them in their future learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Although the quality of teaching and learning is good overall there is some inconsistency. Pupils say they like their teachers and enjoy learning because lessons are interesting and activities challenging. The effective use of praise helps to reinforce pupils' self-esteem. In the Reception class, stimulating teaching develops an enthusiasm for learning in children at an early age. Outstanding teaching is marked by lively explanations and careful use of questions so that pupils quickly grasp what they have to do to succeed. In the less successful lessons pupils do not always know what they have to do and are not given sufficient time to complete tasks to consolidate their learning. Teachers use assessment well to check pupils' progress and give them clear guidance when marking their work. Effective use of teaching assistants ensures that good quality support is given to those pupils with additional learning needs and the few at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned and meets the needs of all pupils well. Good provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that children are presented with many interesting and challenging ways for them to learn. The extension of this provision into Year 1 establishes a good base on which to build. Throughout the school due emphasis is given to the development of the basic skills in literacy and numeracy. French lessons for all pupils broaden their learning experiences. Close links with the nearby special school develop pupils' awareness of the needs of others. A wide range of visits to places of interest and visitors to school make learning more relevant and interesting. These enrich the curriculum well and add to pupils' enjoyment of learning. The strong focus on personal, social, health and citizenship education is reflected in the pupils' outstanding personal development. Everyone has the opportunity to become involved in the wide range of after-school activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and contribute strongly to pupils' progress, enjoyment and well-being. Very careful attention is paid to all health and safety issues, and child protection procedures are in place. Parents and carers feel very welcome in school, saying they 'are overwhelmed by the warm, caring reception' they receive. Through meetings and discussions they are very strongly encouraged to be involved in their children's education. Pupils particularly value the clear academic guidance they are given through their individual targets and teachers' marking of their work, which helps them understand what they need to do to make their work better. Very clear strategies are in place for the early identification of pupils who may be in need

of additional support. Pupils with additional learning needs and those at an early stage of learning English flourish with the support they receive. All pupils are welcomed, guided and supported in this exceptionally caring school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is a good role model for staff. Her determination to meet the needs of all pupils and provide them with a high quality education is effectively communicated to all staff. This has successfully developed a positive team approach with a strong commitment to equality of opportunity. Parents are very pleased at the high quality care provided and the progress made by their children. Performance data is analysed carefully in order to plan intervention for any pupils who are underachieving. School improvement planning is well organised and accurately focuses on the important areas needing development, although the monitoring role of subject coordinators is underdeveloped. The governors are an important part of the team; they are committed and fulfil their responsibilities well. They monitor the school's performance carefully in order that they can give effective support and challenge.

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Inspection judgements

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| 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

| | |
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| 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 | 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

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| 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? | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 |

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

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| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 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

As you know, two inspectors recently visited your school to find out how well you are learning. Thank you for being so friendly and for talking to us. We very much enjoyed being in your school and listening to what you had to say. We decided that St Mary's Catholic Primary is a good school with some strong features. We particularly liked the welcoming atmosphere and the way staff work hard to make learning exciting for you. This was very clear to us because many of you told us how much you enjoy school. The staff take extremely good care of you and are always trying to improve the school so that you continue to do well in your learning. We were impressed at the way older pupils take care of younger ones and the involvement of the school council in the life of the school. But most of all, we liked the way you work hard for your teachers and behave so brilliantly in lessons and around the school. This is very important and is the main reason you achieve so well.

There are two things the school should do to make it even better. Although in most lessons teachers make sure that you understand what you have to do and give you time to complete your work, this is not always so. Ensuring that they always do this will help you to improve. We also think that teachers in charge of subjects need to check carefully how well you are doing in lessons so that they can help you to reach even higher standards.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. We hope that you will continue to work hard and help the teachers so that St Mary's Catholic Primary becomes an even better school.