

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Batley

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107732
Local Authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	287901
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Bill Keast

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	296
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr W West
Headteacher	Mr F Foster
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2001
School address	Upton Street Batley West Yorkshire WF17 8PH
Telephone number	01924 326740
Fax number	01924 326741

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average urban primary school draws its pupils from a wide area which includes pockets of significant disadvantage. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. St Mary's has a proud record of raising funds for charity. It has the Sport England Activemark award and FA Charter Standard Mark for football.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school provides a sound education for its pupils and gives satisfactory value for money. It is not as effective as it thought it was because pupils make only satisfactory progress.

Pupils enjoy coming to school because of the good relationships they have with their teachers and the good care and support they are given. They feel safe and have someone they can turn to if they had a worry. Pupils behave well. They understand and remember the safety and the health messages which are well promoted by the school. The school works well in partnership with others, for example through visitors and visits, to promote pupils' well-being. Pupils make a good contribution to the broader community through their many and effective fund-raising activities. Understanding the needs of others makes a particularly strong contribution to their good personal development.

Pupils' standards are average by the end of Year 6 and their achievement is satisfactory. This has been the case for several years. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and improving. It has strengths in, for example, the teachers' knowledge of the needs of young children, the linking of indoor and outdoor provision for investigations, and the management of behaviour. Children quickly learn new routines and to work and play with others. They make satisfactory progress. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. Teaching has good features but is satisfactory overall because some teachers use the school's new strategies more effectively than others. As a result, there is too great a variation in the quality of teaching. Pupils are well supported in their learning by the classroom assistants. Those who may be struggling are given additional support to help them make better progress. The use of targets is developing. These are becoming more specific to the individual and are known and used by the pupils. However, marking does not yet regularly tell pupils how they might improve a piece of work.

The school knows its strengths and where improvement is needed but, in judging all but standards and achievement to be good, has been overgenerous in its judgements. Inspectors agree with the school's judgements on pupils' personal development, on the provision for their care, guidance and support and on the curriculum but not about other aspects of its work. Actions taken to tackle weaknesses have resulted in improvement. Monitoring of classroom performance and of pupils' work has not been sufficiently rigorous to allow leaders to identify clearly what action would be most effective. Procedures to track pupils' achievement are developing and identify progress made by pupils by the end of a year. They are not yet used to check whether pupils are making the expected progress during the year. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory with all identified issues being tackled but not totally resolved. The school has satisfactory capacity to make further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils experience teaching of a consistent and sustained high quality in order to raise standards and achievement.
- Improve the quality of marking so that all pupils are aware how well a piece of work meets their current targets and how they could improve it.
- Improve the rigour of monitoring and evaluation so that issues for improvement are clearly identified and the most effective actions are taken.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children enter the Foundation Stage with standards that are generally as expected for their age. Their progress in their first two years is satisfactory and they maintain standards at national expectations. Some children with initially low social skills make good progress. In 2006, standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 were broadly average and there was no significant difference between subjects. Standards have been broadly average over the last five years. All groups of pupils in Year 6 made broadly average progress, as they have done for last three years.

The school achieved its targets in 2006. These targets, based upon the average progress made nationally by similar pupils, were appropriate.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their good personal development results from the opportunities provided through the curriculum, the good support and guidance they receive and the commitment of their teachers. Pupils are proud of their school and say they enjoy coming, and they clearly enjoy their lessons. The vast majority of parents confirm that their children enjoy school. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils behave well and are considerate both to each other and to visitors. They feel safe at school and understand how to keep themselves safe. They do not feel bullying is an issue and say that any incidents are quickly and effectively dealt with. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves fit and healthy. Their good understanding of and commitment to others less fortunate than themselves are shown by their many fund-raising activities. Pupils take their role as school councillors seriously and through it they influence the development of their school. Older pupils have volunteered and been trained as 'befrienders' and are soon to take up their role. Pupils' development of basic skills is effectively promoted but most pupils have few opportunities to take responsibility or to be involved in enterprise activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Within the overall satisfactory teaching there are strengths. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships are good. Pupils pay attention, work hard and enjoy their lessons. Support staff are used well to help meet the needs of pupils in the class. Work is generally well matched to pupils' needs and most lessons move at a brisk pace. Teachers use the new interactive whiteboards well to stimulate pupils' interest and support their learning. The use of talking partners is being developed to help self-confidence and reinforce learning. All teachers tell pupils what the objectives of the lesson are but these are not always expressed with sufficient precision to enable pupils to check for themselves what they have learned. Some teachers encourage pupils to use their understanding of what is expected from a piece of work to evaluate how well it has been completed. The development of marking has been a school focus. Regular marking frequently praises the quality of pupils' work. It does not often identify specifically what is good or explain how pupils can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets statutory requirements and is enhanced by the provision for French. It promotes pupils' personal development well, particularly in understanding how to keep safe, fit and healthy. These aspects are supported by a good range of visits and visitors which enrich pupils' learning experiences. The International Week, much enjoyed by pupils, enabled them to develop their learning across the curriculum through a common theme. The curriculum responds well to the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with a good range of support strategies. It makes specific provision for those identified as particularly gifted or talented. The opportunity for older pupils to have a residential visit helps their social development. Pupils enjoy the extra-curricular clubs but the range of these is limited and is weighted towards sporting activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Child protection procedures are in place. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet national requirements. Appropriate risk assessments are undertaken, ensuring a safe environment both in the school and on visits. The school promotes messages of anti-bullying, safety and healthy lifestyles well. Good provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Their needs are identified early and detailed individual education plans are written and regularly reviewed. End of year targets are set for all pupils and older pupils are aware of what these are. Older pupils often have more individual targets, mainly in literacy. The school places emphasis on one-to-one discussion with pupils about their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

There is a clear and shared desire to improve. Teachers know their pupils well and work hard and effectively to promote the progress of each individual. Leadership responsibilities are shared more equitably than at the time of the previous inspection. Monitoring is now more regular and is not restricted to senior leaders. Issues have been identified and action for improvement has been taken. However, monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work is not sufficiently rigorous. It has not ensured the consistency of teaching or that the school's new strategies are being used equally effectively by all teachers. Leaders have not identified with sufficient clarity what needs to be achieved and how they can do this. Action planning is not detailed enough to ensure that strategies for change are fully effective and that progress towards improvement can be evaluated clearly. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive of the school but they rely too heavily on information from senior leaders. They are involved in monitoring planned actions but not in evaluating their impact. Financial resources have been satisfactorily used to ensure that the school is well resourced.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	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?	3
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	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	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for your welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and seeing you at work in your lessons.

We think your school is giving you a satisfactory education. You told us how much you enjoy school, how you like your teachers and that lessons are fun. You said you feel safe and cared for at school and that there is someone you trust and would go to if you have any worries. You behave well and are very polite, especially to visitors. Your school helps you to develop your personal skills well. You have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy. Those of you in Years 5 and 6 are lucky to have opportunities to stay away for a night or two and you look forward to and enjoy this opportunity. Those of you who are school council members take your responsibilities seriously and have an opportunity to influence the development of your school. You work very hard to raise funds for others less fortunate than you are.

Teaching at your school is satisfactory with much that is good. Some of your teachers are using the school's new ways of teaching better than others. Your teachers and classroom assistants understand the different needs that each of you has. Together they work hard to meet these needs and make sure that you are helped to learn. You pay attention well and work hard in your lessons. As a result you make steady and satisfactory progress.

To help you learn as well as you can we have asked the school to do its very best to make sure that you are all taught equally well. We have also asked that when teachers mark your work they tell you why they think it is good and how you could improve it for next time. Finally, to help your teachers be certain that they are taking the best action possible to improve your learning and progress, we have asked them to be very clear about identifying what they need to do.