



# St Mary's RC Lower School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 109630  
**LEA** BEDFORDSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 288459  
**Inspection dates** 13 July 2006 to 14 July 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. Godfrey Bancroft AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	First	<b>School address</b>	Dunstable Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		LU1 4BB
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 9		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01582602420
<b>Number on roll</b>	134	<b>Fax number</b>	01582602420
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr. Richard Neal
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30 April 2001	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Kirstie Yuen

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a much smaller than average primary school. Many pupils are from parts of the community that face considerable social and economic challenges. Attainment on entry is broadly average. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. Even so, the number speaking English as an additional language is relatively low. The percentage of pupils who have additional learning needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

This is an outstanding school. The inspection findings are more positive than the school's self-evaluation, which tends to be modest about its performance. Pupils of all abilities achieve very well. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is outstanding and their attainment exceeds that expected for their age. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 (the last year in which pupils attend the school) are well above average. Even so, standards in mathematics, whilst above average, are not as good as those in English. The school is currently focussing attention on improving pupils' mathematical problem-solving skills. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they have very good attitudes to their learning. Teaching and learning are excellent and lessons meet pupils' needs very effectively. The curriculum is also outstanding and is enhanced by a very good range of additional activities. The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are exemplary, enabling them to learn in a safe environment and to become very knowledgeable about their progress and how to improve. Leadership and management are excellent, with the headteacher providing a very clear educational direction. Her leadership has enabled provision and standards to improve significantly. So much so, that improvement since the school's last inspection is outstanding. Governors do a very good job and are supportive and knowledgeable about the school. Parents and carers have overwhelmingly positive views of the school. The school's capacity to maintain its improvement is very good and it provides outstanding value for money.

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

- Complete the implementation of strategies to improve pupils' problem-solving skills so that mathematics standards match those in English.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve very well and make outstanding progress. Pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities also make excellent progress. Children in the Nursery and Reception class make very good progress in all areas of their learning, but especially in their personal, social and emotional development. By the time they leave the Reception class they attain standards that exceed those expected for their age. Over the last three years and since the time of the last inspection standards have improved dramatically. Standards at the end of Year 2 in reading and writing are well above average, whilst standards in mathematics are above average. Like those for the end of Year 2, standards at the end of Year 4 have also improved significantly and are now well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics. The school is very aware of this and has introduced measures designed to improve standards in mathematics to match those in English. Throughout the school the standard of speaking and listening is very high. Pupils also attain good standards in a range of other subjects, including geography, history and religious education. The

school sets realistic and appropriately challenging targets for attainment that are invariably met successfully.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils behave very well and have excellent attitudes to their learning. Many pupils are very confident speakers who contribute very well during lessons. They are very caring and supportive towards each other and embrace responsibility eagerly. The school does all it can to promote good attendance. However, attendance is below average. This is caused by a significant minority of pupils who sometimes have to leave the area and are unable to attend consistently. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Assemblies and the school's strong religious ethos make a very valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual development. The school meets all aspects of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda very effectively. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They are knowledgeable about the need to eat healthily and to take regular exercise. They understand the values of their community and the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils acquire basic skills and apply them very well. Consequently, they are well placed to contribute to their future economic well-being.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching and learning are outstanding and lessons are exciting and enjoyable. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and set challenges that meet the full range of abilities in each class very well. They set the scene for lessons clearly and build very effectively on pupils' previous learning. Pupils are very committed learners who apply their skills very well in all subjects. They work very well independently and in partnerships and groups. Teachers promote pupils' speaking and listening very effectively. Consequently, pupils respond to questions very thoughtfully and participate in discussions with great enthusiasm. Teachers use information and communication technology very well to enhance pupils' learning. The latter part of lessons is used effectively to assess pupils' progress and often involves pupils in making thorough assessments of their own learning. Teachers' marking is of the highest quality. It evaluates pupils work accurately and provides them with very helpful advice about how to improve. Teaching assistants support pupils' learning very well.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum, including that for the Foundation Stage, is very good and meets pupils learning needs very well. The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and for citizenship. Teachers raise pupils' awareness of

the links between subjects very effectively to create a seamless learning experience. They also provide very good opportunities for pupils to apply their speaking and listening, writing and information and communication technology skills in a wide range of subjects. The school provides a very good range of educational visits and after school clubs that enhance pupils' learning very well. Extra-curricular activities include athletics, book club, gardening, hockey and a wide range of opportunities for pupils to benefit from musical tuition.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. There are very effective arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe and secure. The school is very good at raising pupils' self-esteem and developing their social skills. Pupils' personal development is monitored very thoroughly. Consequently, the needs of any potentially vulnerable pupils or those experiencing emotional difficulties are recognised and addressed very effectively. Provision for pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is exemplary and these pupils are supported very well. The needs of pupils who are regarded as gifted and talented are also recognised and met effectively. The school has very good procedures to track pupils' attainment and progress. The needs of pupils who fall behind in their progress are met by a variety of very effective programmes that address any shortfalls in the learning. Arrangements to set targets for pupils' progress are well established. Consequently, pupils are well informed about how they are getting on and about what they need to do to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding. The very high quality of the headteacher's leadership gives the school an educational direction that is clearly focused on improving standards. Her leadership is the single most significant reason for the dramatic improvement in provision and standards since the last inspection. However, the school is in no way complacent and the drive to improve standards continues. The work of the school is typified by an ethos of close cooperation and mutual support amongst staff. Teachers who have management responsibilities, such as subject leaders and the special educational needs co-ordinator, fulfil their duties very well and provide very good support for their colleagues. Arrangements to ensure the continued professional development of all staff are very good. The school evaluates its own performance thoroughly and thoughtfully, although it tends to under-rate the quality of what it provides. Arrangements for the headteacher and staff to check on and evaluate how well the school is working are very good. The school development plan sets out clearly how provision and standards will be improved and how the success of improvements will be evaluated. Governance is very effective. Governors are very supportive and well-informed about the strengths of the school and about areas for development. They also fulfil their role as 'critical friend' to the headteacher effectively. Governors and the headteacher work together very well to manage the school's finances

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and ensure they are used wisely to support pupils' learning. Parents' and carers' views of the school are overwhelmingly positive. They are very appreciative of the strong leadership and of the high quality of teaching. The school is very good at consulting parents and carers, taking account of their views and keeping them informed about activities. The school provides outstanding value for money.





## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</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>	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

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

I really enjoyed my visit to your school and was very impressed by much of what I saw. I think your school is amongst the very best and know that you and many of your parents and carers think so too. Your teachers and teaching assistants are very good at giving you all the help that you need. For your part, you all work very hard and attain standards that are much better than found in most other schools. I know that you are very proud of your school and of the work you do. Your behaviour is very good and this enables you to be very good learners. You are very fortunate that your teachers provide exciting and interesting lessons. They also provide an excellent range of trips and additional activities that make your learning even more enjoyable. All the staff are very good at taking care of you and making sure you are safe. Your school governors and headteacher do a very good job to make sure that everything works well and that you have all you need to help you to learn successfully. Even so, there is one thing that your governors, headteacher and teachers will be doing to make your learning even better. They are going to be working very hard to help you to attain standards in mathematics that will be every bit as good as the standards you achieve in English. Well done. Keep on working hard and doing your very best.