

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bodmin

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112020
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	289149
Inspection dates	1–2 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Christine Huard

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	258
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Lindsell
Headteacher	Katy Cox
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2002
School address	Barn Lane Bodmin PL31 1LW
Telephone number	01208 73218
Fax number	01208 73383

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This Catholic primary school serves the Parish of St Mary's and the surrounding community. It is an area of some socio-economic deprivation. About a quarter of the pupils are Catholic. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average. The attainment of children when they enter the Nursery varies from year to year between below and well below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school providing a sound education for its pupils. The school's vision, 'We work as one...building on our foundations of faith, to provide an excellent and inclusive education', is central to its ethos, and all are striving to fulfil this through their commitment to the all-round development of the pupils. One comment was typical of many from the strongly supportive parents, 'Every adult in St Mary's has gone out of their way to go the extra mile for all of our children.'

Standards are rising and the key to this improvement is the strong leadership of the headteacher. She has introduced a robust monitoring programme. This has identified weaknesses in English, mathematics and science and the school is tackling these appropriately. As a result of improvements in teaching and learning, standards are now broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The exciting provision in the Nursery and Reception classes ensures that children get a good start to their schooling, enabling them to make good progress. Nevertheless, there is still more to be done in Years 1 to 6. 'Big Write Friday' has resulted in significant advances in pupils' writing. However, basic spelling and punctuation, although improving, are still poor. These bring down the standard of otherwise exciting and imaginative work. In science and mathematics, pupils have too little scope to solve problems, experiment and record their findings.

Pupils enthusiastically acknowledge that the setting of targets and careful marking help them to understand what they need to do to make progress in their learning. The care, support and guidance they receive are good. Pupils are well looked after and they receive excellent support for their personal development. A wide range of rewards and sanctions serve as incentives for improved attendance, exemplary behaviour and caring for each other. The pupils love school and say they would not want to change anything. They eagerly take on responsibilities, such as fund-raising for local, national and international charities, and show a real responsibility towards the environment following work with the Eden project and the local council. Overall, their personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils have positive attitudes towards their work. They enjoy learning because teachers plan carefully, make an effort to motivate them and ensure lessons are lively. Teaching is satisfactory and much good teaching and learning was observed during the inspection. Sometimes the pace of learning slips because teachers talk for too long, leaving pupils with insufficient time to complete tasks. A range of visits and visitors makes a good contribution to the satisfactory curriculum. Planning does not identify opportunities for practising writing in every subject, limiting opportunities for pupils to develop their skills.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Morale is high, staff know how well the school is doing and strategies to bring about improvements have been embraced by the whole school team.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Plan and provide more opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their literacy skills, especially spelling and punctuation, in all subjects.

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to solve problems, investigate and experiment in mathematics and science.
- Increase the pace of lessons in order to raise the standards of teaching from satisfactory to good.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because of the wide range of exciting experiences offered across all areas of learning. However, most have still not achieved the goals expected by the time they join Year 1. Across the school, pupils make satisfactory progress and standards are broadly average. In Years 1 and 2 pupils are making satisfactory progress and standards are broadly in line with those expected. In Years 3 to 6, achievement is satisfactory. Pupils do well in reading but writing is below average because pupils' spelling and punctuation skills are weak. In mathematics and science, pupils have too few chances to use their skills to solve problems and carry out experiments in order to consolidate their knowledge and understanding. The school broadly met the targets set in English last summer, but not those in mathematics. It is well on course to meeting the challenging but realistic targets set for this year. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress, as do those learning English for the first time, because the quality of the support they receive is appropriately matched to their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Excellent behaviour, secure relationships, and self-confident pupils are all evident in this lively school. Pupils develop highly positive social and moral attitudes which are firmly underpinned by the strong spirituality that is an essential element of this vibrant community. There are many opportunities to explore the faiths and traditions of other cultures which considerably enhance pupils' understanding of growing up in a multi-ethnic society. Pupils talk animatedly about their personal safety programme and show an excellent awareness of how to stay out of danger. Older pupils are adamant that bullying does not occur - 'but sometimes we do fall out with each other'. 'Fruity Fridays' and a wide range of sports activities contribute to a healthy lifestyle and pupils clearly understand the importance of this. Pupils have a voice and through the 'suggestions box' determine the issues to be followed up by the highly effective school council. Although most leave the school with average standards of basic skills, pupils' very well developed personal skills, especially confidence and self-esteem, prepare them well for the next stage in their education and later life. Most attend regularly, but attendance is satisfactory overall due to the extended leave taken by a very few pupils during the course of the school year.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Children learn effectively in the Nursery and Reception classes because teaching is good there and activities match the needs of individual children. In Years 1 to 6, teachers plan lessons carefully. They know what they expect pupils to learn and their explanations are clear. As a consequence, pupils are confident about tackling their work. Much of the teaching observed during the inspection was good and some was outstanding.

However, this good teaching is not sufficiently widespread to ensure that all pupils make the best progress possible. One frequent weakness is that the pace of lessons is too slow because teachers talk for too long. This means that too little time is available for pupils to carry out tasks and consolidate their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties learn effectively because they receive appropriate support in the classroom, as do the few pupils at an early stage of learning English. Marking is good. It usually identifies what pupils need to do to make progress and pupils say it helps them understand how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A good range of stimulating learning opportunities is provided in the Nursery and Reception classes which enable the children to make good progress across all areas of learning. Excellent provision is made for all aspects of pupils' personal development. Planning of topics demonstrates that pupils receive a well balanced curriculum. However, there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to consolidate skills gained in literacy in other subjects. The school plans satisfactorily to ensure the needs of pupils who are learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties are met appropriately. Pupils enjoy the sound range of activities provided after school which broaden their scope for learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils thrive owing to good support based on teachers' familiarity with their individual needs. Detailed assessments and target-setting are key features, regularly reviewed. Pupils know their learning levels, have increasingly challenging academic targets and know what they need to do to improve. However, the progress made by pupils with learning difficulties is not always well recorded. Procedures to ensure that pupils are kept safe and secure, including those relating to child protection, are well established and staff are familiar with them. Good procedures ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, staff and governors have worked together to create an environment where pupils enjoy coming to school and show real enthusiasm for learning. The headteacher's leadership is outstanding and sets the tone for the caring community at St Mary's. Her commitment to pupils' academic and personal development is exemplary. The senior management team carefully monitor the work of the school and they and the governors have a good overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their evaluations are not only accurate but effective. For example, despite being made a priority, standards in science had not been improving. Consequently, it was decided to teach science as a separate subject and recent testing indicates that standards are beginning to improve, although more still needs to be done. Senior managers have also acted effectively to deal with inadequacies in teaching. Regular and rigorous lesson observations assess the quality of learning and provide comprehensive feedback to enable teachers to develop their skills. Governors are knowledgeable and fully involved in the school. They fulfil their statutory duties well and challenge the school effectively. Staff with management responsibilities have a sound understanding of their role in monitoring the effectiveness of their subjects. Senior staff and governors are aware that there is more to do to raise standards

further and that the consequences of actions already taken are still to be fully felt. Nevertheless, the indications are positive and the school has a secure base for further improvement.

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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	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
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	2

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?	3
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	2
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	3
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	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

3 May 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bodmin, PL31 1LW

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You certainly seem to be very happy and it was good to hear how you enjoy your work and all the extra activities in which you are involved. We think your school gives you a sound education and is working hard to make it even better.

This is what we thought about your school:

- You behave well and are really keen to learn.
- You are doing much better in English, mathematics and science this year.
- You take very seriously the importance of eating healthily at school and taking physical exercise.
- The curriculum covers all the subjects you are supposed to learn and you enjoy the visits and visitors which bring learning alive for you.
- Teachers help you to make the progress you should and you say learning is often made fun.
- The teachers and staff take good care of you while you are in school.
- Your headteacher understands very well what must be done to make your school even better.

Some things that can be improved:

- We think you need to improve your spelling and punctuation and have asked the school to give you more opportunities to practise your literacy in all subjects.
- We would like you to have more opportunities to solve problems in mathematics and to plan and carry out more investigations and experiments for yourselves in science.
- We have asked teachers not to make the introduction to lessons too long so that you have enough time to complete your written tasks.

We are glad you enjoy your school and hope you will continue to work hard.

Very best wishes,

Mrs Christine Huard Lead inspector