



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112358
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289258
Inspection dates 13–14 February 2007
Reporting inspector Dave Byrne

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Springfield Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Ulverston, Cumbria
Age range of pupils	4–11		LA12 0EA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01229 894132
Number on roll (school)	126	Fax number	01229 585132
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Mike Smith
		Headteacher	Mr Paul Brown
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 13–14 February 2007	Inspection number 289258
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British ethnic background and many are from advantaged homes. The percentage eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. An above average percentage has statements of special educational need and the proportion of pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties is average. The attainment of children starting the Reception class varies from year-to-year, but overall, it is above what is typically found for children of their age.

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 a number of outstanding features. Through the outstanding levels of care, the excellent leadership of the headteacher, the good teaching and lively and exciting curriculum, pupils do well and gain high standards. The vast majority of parents rate the school highly. As one put it,

‘St Mary’s is a caring school where each child is respected and treated as an individual.’ Excellent links with the local community and other schools add considerably to the achievement of pupils.

Pupils’ personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. Consequently, behaviour is nearly always impeccable. If an individual strays, they are effectively supported. Throughout the school, pupils have a very good awareness of the choices required to be fit and healthy. Pupils say they feel safe and thoroughly enjoy school. They like the lively and exciting lessons, enjoy making good friends and participating in the excellent range of extra-curricular activities available to them. Pupils develop good levels of self-confidence and respond very maturely to the many expectations for them to help other pupils and staff. The pupils’ excellent attitudes contribute to their good achievement and this prepares them exceedingly well for the future. After starting school with good standards, pupils make good progress. Standards at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science have been consistently very high since 2001 and are above average at the end of Year 2. Pupils also do well in information and communication technology (ICT), art and physical education. Standards in music are high and pupils have enjoyed considerable success in local festivals. In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress and many exceed the learning goals at the end of the Reception class in most areas of their learning, but they could do better in their creative development.

Teaching is good with some outstanding features. In Key Stage 1 and 2 high expectations are made of pupils to act and think on their own. As a result, pupils become confident in their own abilities to not only learn essential facts, but also use research skills to broaden what they know. Teachers do a good job in supporting pupils who find learning difficult and also in encouraging gifted and talented pupils to reach their potential. Although staff know their pupils well, the systems to monitor their performance are rather cumbersome and make it difficult to track pupils’ progress.

Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, a strong staff team effectively manage the school. There is a culture among staff that no matter how good the school, it can always be improved. This lack of complacency gives the school a good capacity to improve further in future. Governance is good, making sure that the school, is safe, management effective and the best value is gained from its budget.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in creative development for children in the Foundation Stage.
- Refine recording systems so that it is easier to track pupils’ achievement over time.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are excellent well above the national average. Children start school with advanced skills in terms of their personal, social and emotional development, and also have a good knowledge and understanding of the world, good speech and language and good levels of mathematical awareness. Good provision overall in the Foundation Stage builds on these good starting points so that by the end of Reception, most children reach and many exceed, the learning goals expected for their age in all areas except creative development. Good teaching in Key Stage 1 successfully extends these good standards. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 show standards are above average overall and particularly good in writing. In Key Stage 2, good teaching ensures progress continues at a good rate. The results of national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2006 show standards are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. These good results maintained the very high standards gained in each of the previous four years. Assessments data show that pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties and those with gifts and talents achieve well. School records indicate that in 2007 its challenging targets will be achieved and in so doing maintain the current high standards. Standards in ICT are much better than at the last inspection and are now good in Key Stage 2. Strengths remain in art and design and in addition now include music and physical education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. As a result of the very caring ethos within school and supportive homes, pupils feel safe and secure. They develop confidence without arrogance and form excellent relationships with others. They have a deep understanding of what constitutes good behaviour. The pupils' obvious love of school is reflected in very high rates of attendance. Their views are valued. The school council is very influential and not only raises funds for appeals and charities but also helps to modify the behaviour of some pupils. Although behaviour is excellent, at times one or two pupils with emotional difficulties can be mildly disruptive. Such events are rare and are managed successfully. Pupils have a good awareness of others less fortunate than they are, as exemplified by the way they raise funds for charities such as 'Shoebiz' and support 'AquAid' in providing a water pump for a village in Zimbabwe. Through activities such as being playground leaders and older ones helping younger ones, pupils become confident to take responsibility for their own actions and that of others. They have a very good understanding of the choices required to be fit and healthy and are exceptionally well prepared for being good citizens in the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good with some outstanding features. Pupils benefit from a talented team of teachers and teaching assistants who set high standards and plan and teach lessons that are imaginative and exciting. Many lessons are practical and encourage pupils to take risks and develop good levels of thinking as well as producing good quality written work. The total involvement of Year 6 pupils in cracking a complex code in mathematics typifies the exciting techniques used by teachers to promote good learning. All staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach because constant professional development keeps them up-to-date with change. As a result, standards in ICT have risen, progress in writing in Key Stage 2 has improved and aspects of provision in the Foundation Stage have been modernised. While teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall, there is still more to be done to improve opportunities for children to develop their imaginative play and creative skills. Across the school, all staff know pupils well which helps them to provide suitably for all pupils including those with learning and behavioural difficulties and those identified as especially gifted and talented. Marking and homework are imaginatively used to improve the standards of pupils' work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with excellent levels of enrichment that add lots of fun to learning. The Foundation Stage has strengths in its provision for all areas except creative development. Important features such as role play and opportunities for independent choice by children are relatively weak. In Key Stage 1 and 2, planning is of high calibre and some excellent links between subjects bring learning alive. The basic skills of reading, writing, mathematics and ICT are successfully blended into subjects such as history and science so that pupils can apply what they know and can do. Excellent provision is made for music and many aspects of physical education. This is reflected in the school gaining accreditation for the Artsmark and Activemark. Very good provision for those with learning and behavioural difficulties and others with gifts and talents promotes high levels of inclusion. Excellent links with other schools and the community expose pupils to a wide range of very positive experiences beyond day-to-day school life. Thoughtfully planned educational visits, including residential stays for pupils in Key Stage 2, successfully broaden the curriculum. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities is very popular with pupils of all ages and adds enjoyment to learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school is a safe and secure place for children to learn and the school does all it can to remove all reasonable risk. All adults in contact with pupils are carefully vetted for suitability, child protection procedures are rigorous and kept up-to-date, and very good procedures minimise bullying and tackle any incidents of harassment or racism. Within some limitations of resources, great care is taken to meet the emotional needs of pupils and to do what is best for those who find learning difficult. Procedures for tracking pupils' achievement over time are effective but are rather cumbersome and it is not easy to obtain the required information. Nevertheless, they do include imaginative strategies to identify and extend pupils with particular gifts and talents, for example in mathematics, music and physical education. Assessment information is also used well to ensure pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and vision for the school. Together with a strong, committed staff and supportive parents and governors, he has created a school with an exceptional ethos of care. This values not only pupils' personal development, but also their academic achievement. Rooted throughout the school, is a culture that what is being done can always be improved. This lack of complacency encourages staff to continually participate in training and to look outwards to find ways of enhancing what is already happening. As a result, the school has improved well since the last inspection. Standards are improving in writing and ICT. The role of staff in managing and leading subjects is now good, particularly in English, mathematics, science, ICT, music and sport. Leadership of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is of high quality and benefits the pupils. School self-evaluation is accurate with the exception of the attainment on entry to school which assesses children starting school at too low a level. Governors are effectively involved in not only supporting the school, but also monitoring its effectiveness. All resources are carefully deployed to get best value for money.

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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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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

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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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

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	1
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

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Springfield Road

Ulverston

Cumbria

LA12 0EA

16 February 2007

Dear Pupils

You are quite right in your judgements that your school is good. As a result of the two days I spent with you, it is clear that nearly all of you do very well in reading, writing, mathematics and science and also many of you have good skills in using computers. Your musical skills are impressive, your singing is delightful, and many of you seem to do well at sport. Your smiles and laughter at play and enthusiasm to do well in lessons is one reason why you clearly enjoy school. Those of you who are playground leaders and buddies or school councillors quite rightly talk with pride about the way you help others.

You benefit from skilled and caring teachers who make sure that you are not only safe and secure but also provide exciting lessons. Not only do you learn facts, but you also learn to use these to solve problems and carry out research. The way Years 5 and 6 presented their PowerPoint presentations was most impressive. From the youngest of ages, children settle in quickly to school life and in Reception develop good skills of reading, writing, mathematics and in terms of their social skills. I have discussed with the school that the youngest children enjoy their learning but do not always have enough time to develop their creativity.

Your teachers know you all well which shows in the way that lessons are planned to make sure that you are all given work which matches your ability. Your class helpers are a vital part of the team. I have asked the school to improve the way it records your progress to make it easier to keep an eye on how well you are doing. You are fortunate to have such an exciting curriculum with lots of clubs and visits. This certainly seems to add fun to school life.

Finally, just a word about your headteacher; just like a successful sports team, the manager often makes all the difference. Your headteacher is excellent and uses all of his energies to make sure that the team of staff do as well as they can for you. I hope you carry on supporting the school and each other, and above all, continue to be thoughtful and considerate people.

Yours sincerely

David Byrne

Lead inspector