

St Marys Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114566
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	289971
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Taylor

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Dean
Headteacher	Liz Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2002
School address	Chapel Green Crowborough TN6 2LB
Telephone number	01892 655291
Fax number	01892 661365

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

In this average-sized school, the proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. A few pupils speak English as an additional language. The school has gained a number of awards, including Artsmark Gold, Healthy Schools Silver Award and Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors and senior leaders agree that the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Children make satisfactory progress in Reception and good progress in Key Stage 1. Progress at Key Stage 2 has not been consistent and has been declining. Pupils in Year 6 in 2006 underachieved, especially the boys. This prompted the local authority to put in place a support package for the school. This has effectively addressed the underachievement in writing and mathematics by improving subject leadership, teaching and the way that all pupils' progress is tracked as they move through the school. This has been effective in helping to halt the decline in standards and progress. Tracking information shows that pupils across Years 3 to 6 have made satisfactory progress during the current academic year. Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Most pupils enjoy school, behave well and develop good relationships. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall and pastoral care is good. Pupils are happy in school, safe and well cared for. The school works well with parents, carers, the parish and external agencies. Parents support their children's education well. Many hold the school in high regard, but some recognise there is scope for improvement, especially to teaching and pupils' progress. The satisfactory curriculum, including that in the Foundation Stage, promotes pupils' enjoyment and fitness well. Extra-curricular provision and arts provision are good. Recent improvements have been made to mathematics and English provision, including further efforts to engage boys' interests. The school has, however, been slow to review work in science and to investigate fully the reasons for boys' underachievement. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but there is insufficient good teaching to move learning on more quickly. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of pupils. Furthermore, in some classes, not enough use is made of assessments, both to plan work for pupils of different abilities and to pinpoint weaknesses that teachers need to address and which pupils need to work on. The headteacher maintains the school's positive ethos and ensures it runs smoothly. She has been successful in bringing about improvements to standards at Key Stage 1 and in raising staff and governors' awareness that improvements are needed. External support is helping to strengthen subject and phase leaders' roles. The school has still some way to go to improve provision further and ensure that pupils continue to make at least satisfactory progress. Monitoring and evaluation of provision and lessons lacks rigour and incisiveness, and so does not pinpoint the weaknesses in teaching, learning, progress and attainment precisely enough to ensure rapid improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching, particularly the level of challenge and the use of assessments to plan work for different ability groups and guide pupils about how to improve.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels develop the skills to critically evaluate teaching and provision so as to tackle remaining weaknesses and secure further improvements quickly.
- Review the science provision so as to identify and tackle any weaknesses.
- Monitor boys' achievements more closely, especially at Key Stage 2. 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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although there are some year-on-year variations, standards at the end of Year 6 are satisfactory and pupils achieve satisfactorily during their time in the school. From an above-average starting point on entry to school, pupils make satisfactory progress in Reception and good progress in Key Stage 1, especially in Year 2. Standards in Year 2 have been rising, and were exceptionally high in reading and mathematics in 2005 and 2006 and above average in writing. Current Year 2 standards show a similar picture. Standards at the end of Year 6 improved in 2005 and were above average. Standards then declined in 2006 and were average overall. This means that Year 6 pupils underachieved. Boys' progress was inadequate and the majority of pupils did not meet their targets. Since that time the school has, with external support, been working to improve pupils' progress in English and mathematics, especially in Years 3 to 6. Recent test results indicate that standards in Year 6 have improved. The school's tracking information shows that progress in Years 3 to 6 is now adequate for all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and the small number who are new to learning English. The school has not taken steps to improve overall science standards and progress, but standards in the current Year 6 class are better than last year, at least in part because of intensive revision. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are in line with those expected. Pupils reach good standards in art and design, music and physical education. Many children learn to play musical instruments, and pupils are successful in swimming and competitive sport.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are friendly, polite and eager to learn. They develop good relationships with staff and one another, and most behave well. Pupils told inspectors they feel safe in school and that adults listen to their concerns. Pupils' enjoyment of school is clearly evident in their good attendance and high participation in after-school activities. Good moral and social development is evident in pupils' confidence, maturity and sense of responsibility. As one parent said, 'I am so impressed by how caring pupils are. Older pupils look out for those in the lower years'. Pupils contribute well to helping the school run smoothly, to charities and the wider community. The strong Catholic ethos supports pupils' spiritual development well and good cultural awareness is developed through the arts, visits, visitors and links with schools abroad. Pupils keep fit and healthy through regular swimming and exercise, healthy school lunches and fruit. Pupils' key literacy and numeracy skills prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

General strengths of teaching include classroom organisation and the good relationships that staff have with pupils. Teachers make increasingly good links between subjects and select activities, including visits, to engage pupils' interests, especially those of the boys. This helps to make learning meaningful. The teaching of writing has improved and there is evidence in mathematics that pupils have more opportunities to apply the skills they learn to solve real-life problems. Nevertheless, significant weaknesses in teaching remain. Expectations are not always

high enough. Teachers do not take sufficient account of the needs of pupils of different abilities when planning and delivering lessons. Some teachers talk too much during lessons, even when pupils have stopped listening. This results in pupils having insufficient time to work independently, and teachers and learning assistants then do not have sufficient time to teach groups of pupils. Assessments have improved and are satisfactory. Targets in English and mathematics are set for all pupils but these are not finely tuned or reviewed regularly in every class. Marking is regular, but there are some variations in how well this pinpoints mistakes and informs pupils about what they need to do to improve or to reach the next level.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with strengths. In Reception it gives appropriate attention to all areas of learning, including the basic skills and personal, social and emotional development. The curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 meets requirements. It has been strengthened recently to improve writing and mathematics provision and develop further links between subjects. The school has, however, been slow to review and improve work in science following the decline in standards and progress in Year 6 in 2006, although this is planned to take place next year. Curricular enrichment, including extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors to school, and strong art, music and sports provision, is good. This promotes good standards in the arts as well as pupils' enjoyment, health and fitness.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral support for pupils is good but weaknesses in academic guidance mean care, guidance and support are only satisfactory overall. Pupils develop self-confidence, feel safe and are well supervised and cared for in school. Their views are sought, listened to and acted on. Personal support for vulnerable pupils is good and supported by the strong links with parents and external agencies. Checks on staff and premises and risk assessments take place regularly. Systems are in place to provide guidance to pupils about how to improve their work, for example, through marking and the setting of individual targets. While these are effective in some classes, they are not fully embedded nor consistently applied in all classes. Some targets are too general and do not give pupils a clear enough picture of what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory and provide the school with a sound capacity for improvement. The school has a welcoming ethos and a commitment to do well by its pupils. It runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis, works well with parents and has strengths in pastoral care and provision for the arts. Since her appointment, the headteacher has provided clear direction for the school, but some of the staff and governors have found it difficult to reconcile their own overly positive views of the school with the need for change. Consequently, the school has been slow in addressing weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Recent, external support and intervention, additional temporary management appointments and training have helped to raise the staff's and governors' awareness. Their skills have effectively developed and strengthened the overall leadership and capacity for improvement. As a result, the school as a whole now has a much more accurate picture of how well it is doing and what needs to be

improved. Governors are very supportive of the school and their role as critical friends is developing. Monitoring of teaching and learning takes place regularly, but lesson observations lack rigour. They identify strengths in teachers' skills but say less about the weaknesses or about the impact of teaching on learning, attainment and progress.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	2
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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	4
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	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**

- 7 July 2007 Dear Pupils, St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 2LB Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you. We think that St Mary's provides a satisfactory standard of education. These are the things that work well in your school:
- Pupils in Year 2 reach high standards in reading and mathematics and good standards in writing.
- Pupils throughout the school produce good work in art and some of your work is exceptionally good. Because of the good facilities, you also do well in sports, swimming and music.
- You are friendly, well behaved and polite. You get on well together and take good care of each other. We noticed that older pupils help to take care of younger ones and help the school run smoothly.
- The staff take good care of you. They listen to your views and involve you in making decision about the school. The trips, clubs and after-school activities you take part in help you to develop your talents and to stay fit and healthy. This is what we have asked the headteacher and staff to do next:
- To improve teaching, for example, by improving the way that teachers plan work for different groups of pupils and the feedback they give to you about how you can improve.
- To look very closely at teaching and learning and pupils' work, so they can be very clear about what needs to be done to help some of you to make better progress.
- To review work in science to see how it might be improve.
- To look closely at the progress that boys are making, because in the past some boys have not been progressing as well as girls. You can help by ensuring that you work hard, and think about your own work and learning and what you can do to improve it Thank you once again for making our visit enjoyable. With very best wishes, Kathryn Taylor Lead Inspector