

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115174
Local Authority	THURROCK LA
Inspection number	290154
Inspection dates	12–13 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Ruth Frith

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	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Terry Gilby
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Shields
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2002
School address	Calcutta Road Tilbury Essex RM18 7QH
Telephone number	01375 843254
Fax number	01375 840680

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized primary school situated in an area with higher levels of social and economic disadvantage than found nationally. Many, but not all, children enter school with standards well below those usually seen. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is broadly average. There is an increasing number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of pupils with English as an additional language has also risen to almost a quarter. The school has pupils who are looked after by others than their immediate family or who come from the Traveller community. A higher than average percentage of pupils join or leave the school part way through their primary schooling.

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 where the warm and friendly atmosphere encourages pupils to enjoy their education and do well. Staff are successful in widening pupils' horizons so they acquire good knowledge and understanding of local and wider communities and develop a broad range of personal and academic skills. This prepares them well for later life.

Good improvements have been made since the previous inspection and these have helped to raise pupils' standards and achievement. This good work has been recognised by parents who are positive about the school and appreciative of the work of staff. 'I feel that all the staff are caring, supportive and professional'. Significant improvements have been made to the Nursery and Reception, where provision is good.

Throughout the school, good quality teaching helps pupils to do well. This is because their learning is developed systematically through the provision of challenging work and activities which match their capabilities. Standards are rising but older pupils still suffer from the legacy of weaker provision when progress was only satisfactory. Year 2 standards are broadly average whereas Year 6 standards are generally average in English but below in mathematics and science. Staff are improving standards in science, for example, by providing more investigative activities and are aware of the need to also focus on developing pupils' mental mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

The good curriculum provides pupils with a range of interesting learning opportunities. Because they enjoy what they are doing, pupils behave well, attend school regularly and develop good attitudes to learning. Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. They develop excellent relationships and respect the views of others and different ways of living from their own. Consequently, the school is a harmonious community. Care, support and guidance are also good and help pupils to develop into confident learners whose good knowledge and understanding is encouraging them to live safe and healthy lives.

Leadership and management are good and result in the school providing good value for money. The headteacher shows a strong commitment to the school and local community, and provides a good lead to colleagues. Self-evaluation is accurate and insightful, so staff and governors have a clear understanding of how well the school is doing and what it needs to do next. The enthusiasm and commitment of staff and governors, together with the headteacher's good leadership, indicate that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' skills in mental calculation to raise overall standards in mathematics.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to use ICT across all areas of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From frequently well below average starting points pupils make good progress and achieve well. Children make a good start in the Nursery and Reception, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development and communication skills. However, by the time they enter Year 1, some do not reach the levels expected for their age because they start from such a low base. Staff build on the pupils' early successes, and standards for the current Year 2 are broadly

average. This reflects significant improvement from the 2006 Year 2 national assessments when pupils reached below average standards overall, particularly in reading. The 2006 Year 6 national test results indicated a decline, with pupils achieving below average standards in English, mathematics and science. This reflects that particular cohort who had particularly low attainment on entry to Key Stage 1, and also inconsistency in their teaching over the years. Additional support was given and the school met its realistic targets. The rate of progress of the current Year 6 has improved significantly and they are working at broadly average standards in English and below average levels in mathematics and science. Different groups of pupils generally make similarly good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school places high priority on this area of its work. Pupils settle into school well and quickly make new friends. They are generally courteous and polite, give of their best and take pride in their work. Their behaviour and attitudes are good because they enjoy what they do. Pupils grow in self-awareness, think in moral terms and reflect upon their feelings and actions. They report that there is very little bullying. They enjoy school, attend well and are particularly enthusiastic about the clubs they join and the visits they make. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles and a good understanding of personal safety. This is influencing what they do. They readily offer their views to help improve the school and its environment. Whether supporting an overseas school, raising funds for charities or acting as 'yellow caps' in the playground by supporting others, pupils contribute fully. They are building a good foundation for later life and learning the skills they need for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and motivate them well. Pupils are fully engaged and are mostly keen to contribute to discussions. Good questioning by teachers develops pupils' own ideas. Teachers plan lessons well to meet the full range of pupils' needs. They generate pupils' enthusiasm for learning new skills and match tasks carefully to their widely varying stages of development. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning from relatively low starting points. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to support pupils. This teamwork is particularly effective in supporting a significant minority of pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties and those who are at an early stage of learning English. Ongoing assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress provide useful information to help teachers plan the next steps in learning. However, teachers' marking does not always help pupils to know what they should do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A key success of the curriculum is the way in which it promotes pupils' enjoyment in learning. In the Foundation Stage, children experience a good range of activities across all areas of learning both in the class and outside. The school modifies its curriculum effectively so that those with learning difficulties or disabilities progress well. Pupils at the early stages of learning

English also make good progress because emphasis is placed on developing their communication skills and encouraging their involvement. Assemblies promote a strong sense of community within a very respectful ethos and the effective personal, social and health education programme has a significant impact on pupils' development. Special events and activities stimulate pupils' interest. They talk enthusiastically about these and their progress clearly benefits. Visits and visitors extend and enliven the curriculum. A very good range of after-school activities extends learning, and the oldest pupils benefit from a residential visit that enriches the curriculum and offers stimulating opportunities for personal challenge. French and Spanish lessons are also popular. Provision for ICT is sufficient but pupils have too little use of the computers to fully develop their skills. The accommodation is well cared for. The display of pupils' work enhances the school and helps to raise their self-esteem.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good levels of care, guidance and support help pupils to develop into confident and responsible young citizens. The school works well in partnership with a number of outside agencies to provide good support for vulnerable children and their families. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support so that they make good progress and their self-esteem is enhanced. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English also receive good support. Any individuals who are not making enough progress are quickly identified and extra support is provided to help them catch up. Pupils receive good guidance about how to stay safe and lead healthy lives. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. In most subjects they have clear targets to aim for in order to reach the next stages in their learning. Staff are still developing this work and although initial findings are positive, the full effect is yet to be seen.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and has been successful in sharing this with staff who, in turn, support him well. Good teamwork is evident and staff morale is high. Everyone is encouraged to take initiative and play their full part in developments. Senior managers and subject leaders respond enthusiastically and manage their areas of responsibility well. Staff are keen to improve their practice. There are good procedures for identifying what the school does well and what needs to be done next. Significant changes have been made to the quality of provision and these are key factors in the recent improvements in pupils' progress and achievement. The full effect of these developments is yet to be seen in Year 6 national test results. Governors do a good job and support the school well through their work in committee, visits to classes and talking with staff.

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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?	2
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	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	3
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?	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	2

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?	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?	2
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	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

16 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Tilbury, Essex, RM18 7QH

You may remember that we visited your school to find out about what you learn and what you do. Thank you for making us feel so welcome. We enjoyed talking to you and being in your lessons. I have written below some of the things we liked best.

- You work hard and are making better progress.
- You enjoy school and make good friends.
- Because you are interested in what you are doing you behave well and develop good attitudes to school.
- Most of you go to school regularly and arrive on time. Well done!
- You really enjoy the school clubs and visits.
- You know how to stay healthy by eating a good balance of foods and having plenty of exercise.
- Staff look after you so you feel safe. We were pleased to hear that you would go to a member of staff if you had any problems, particularly if any bullying took place.

Mr Shields manages the school well and gets lots of support from the staff and governors. We have agreed that they need to help you to improve your mental mathematics so that you can work out the answers quickly in a short amount of time. You could help by always trying your best. They are also going to provide you with more opportunities to use the computers. I know you will enjoy this.

Thank you once again and we wish you all well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Frith Lead Inspector