

St Mary's Catholic Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121144
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	292030
Inspection date	22 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Kathleen Yates

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	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Spragg
Headteacher	Peter Cleary
Date of previous school inspection	12-15 November 2001
School address	East Anglian Way Gorleston Great Yarmouth NR31 6QY
Telephone number	01493 445117
Fax number	01493 445118

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors over one day.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, personal development and well being, the quality of teaching and learning, curriculum, care, guidance and support, and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from analysis of data, discussions with the headteacher, investigations into safeguarding, parental questionnaires, observations of lessons, feedback to teachers, interviews with pupils, senior staff, middle management, governors, and a representative of the local authority (LA).

Description of the school

This is an average sized school that draws its pupils from two adjoining Catholic parishes. The number of children entitled to free school meals is lower than average. Most pupils are of White British origin with a growing number from minority ethnic backgrounds, including a few from Traveller families. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is average. The proportion of pupils who either join or leave the school at different times during the year is higher than that found nationally. When children start in the Reception class their skills and knowledge are broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school's overall effectiveness is inadequate and it does not provide satisfactory value for money. Achievement at Key Stage 1 and writing at Key Stage 2 are inadequate. The school does not have in place all the required procedures for safeguarding pupils; teaching and learning are inadequate and the senior leadership and governors have not shown the capacity to identify the school's weaknesses and take decisive action to remedy them.

Attainment on entry to Year 1 is average because of the satisfactory provision in Foundation Stage. In the last two years however, standards in Year 2 have dipped to below average indicating significant underachievement in reading, writing and mathematics. The school attributes the decline to staffing turbulence which disrupted pupils' learning. Standards in Year 6 have been broadly average over recent years indicating satisfactory achievement overall. However, this disguises the fact that standards in writing are too low indicating underachievement in this area over recent years, which the school has not been able to rectify.

While most teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory, parents' comments included dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching in some year groups. The school's systems for checking the quality of teaching and learning have not been rigorous enough to identify or address these inadequacies. Much of the teaching is uninspiring, something that a few parents commented on. One parent expressed this by saying 'it lacks joy'. Despite this, pupils show sound attitudes to their work and behave satisfactorily. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. The best marking tells them how to make their work better but other comments are merely celebratory or cursory and often with recurring points that have not been followed up adequately. Teachers make sound use of interactive whiteboards to add interest to lessons and keep pupils' attention but some lessons rely too heavily on unexciting and unchallenging worksheets. The senior leadership team recognises that some teaching is inadequate but has not taken decisive enough action to turn it around, to increase the proportion of good teaching and tackle the current underachievement. The senior leadership team has not identified precisely why achievement in writing is inadequate or how to improve it. Given that standards at Key Stage 1 have dipped to below average, satisfactory teaching at Key Stage 2 will not be good enough to equip pupils for the next stage of education and adult life. While the curriculum is broadly satisfactory and covers all the required subjects, the programme for the teaching of writing does not engage pupils well enough to have a positive impact on achievement and standards.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development is satisfactory. There are satisfactory systems for preparing children for entry into the Nursery and for their next stage of education. Additionally, the school is often successful in

managing pupils who were unsettled at their previous school. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and participate regularly in making contributions to the community through fundraising. Attendance is below average. This is because the seasonal nature of much of the employment in the area means that school holidays are the busiest times of year for some parents at work. Consequently they take their children for the family holiday in their slack work period which is during term time. The school has worked hard to dissuade parents from taking holidays in term time but in spite of its best endeavours attendance remains an issue. Although the school prides itself on its pastoral care, the provision for the care, guidance and support of pupils is inadequate. This is because the senior leadership team does not have in place all the checks it is required to have to ensure pupils' welfare, safety and protection. Additionally, the lack of rigour in analysing data and evaluating how well pupils are learning means that work is not always set at an appropriate level for their ability.

Leadership and management are inadequate. There have been some improvements since the previous inspection. For example, the senior leadership team has responded satisfactorily to the issues raised during the last inspection and improved standards and achievement in information and communication technology. It has also improved provision in the Foundation Stage by creating a Nursery to give children an earlier start to their schooling. However, the senior leadership team and governors have not been rigorous enough in evaluating how well the school is doing so that their view of the school's strengths and areas for development is inaccurate. They have relied too heavily on external evaluation and support to identify where improvements are needed. Although some of the governors are keen and enthusiastic, the governing body as a whole does not have a strong enough grasp on how well the school is doing and relies too heavily on information from others. Given the lack of rigour in the way the school checks how well it is doing and inaccuracies in its self-evaluation, the school does not demonstrate that it has the capacity to improve without external support.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all requirements and procedures for safeguarding children are put in place immediately.
- Improve the leadership and management at all levels so that together they develop more rigorous systems for checking how well the school is doing and identify the most important priorities for improvement and the most effective ways for bringing about change.
- Raise standards in all subjects at Key Stage 1 and in writing at Key Stage 2.
- Ensure teachers have an accurate view of how well pupils are doing so that they can set appropriately challenging work to accelerate their progress.
- Identify precisely what it is about pupils' writing which prevents them from reaching higher standards and take more appropriate steps to improve it.

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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?	4
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	4
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?	4

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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 B



23 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary and Nursery School, Gorleston,
Norfolk, NR31 6QY

As you know Mr Francis, Mr Nelson and I came to your school recently to carry out an inspection. We really enjoyed meeting you. This letter is to thank you for helping us with our work and to let you know what we found out about your school.

This is what we thought was good about your school

You have made good progress in information and communication technology since the last inspection and are now working as well as most children in other schools in this subject. We think you are very lucky to have such an attractive Nursery so that many of you can enjoy an earlier start to your learning and we know this helps you to settle happily into the Reception class. You have a good understanding of how to eat healthily and of how important it is to take regular exercise to keep fit. You raise a lot of money for those less fortunate than yourselves.

This is what we have asked the school to do now

There are a number of things the school needs to do to make it better for you. The first thing is to make sure that all the rules about keeping you safe are put into place. We have also asked your teachers and governors to keep much tighter checks on how well the school is doing and to find the best ways of improving those areas which most need it so that everyone is clear about how they can help. We have asked the school to make sure all teachers know exactly how well you are doing in your work so that they can set you tasks which help you all work harder. This should help everyone in the school to do better in their writing and those in Key Stage 1 to do better in your reading and mathematics as well so that you reach higher levels than you are doing now.

Other inspectors will visit you regularly to check on your progress.

We wish you all the best for the future

Kathleen Yates, John Francis and Ian Nelson
Inspectors