

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122778
Local Authority	CITY OF NOTTINGHAM
Inspection number	292508
Inspection date	27 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Andrew McDowall HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	257
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Shanahan
Headteacher	Mr J K McGowan
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001
School address	Beaconsfield Street Hyson Green Nottingham NG7 6FL
Telephone number	01159 151799
Fax number	01159 424856

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's is an average sized primary school. It serves an area of significant deprivation but also attracts some pupils from more affluent backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those speaking English as an additional language are well above average. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The school population is continually changing and recently the school has admitted pupils from Poland, India and Zimbabwe. The school is part of an Education Action Zone and receives additional funding to improve links with the community and enrich the curriculum. The school has achieved the Active Mark, Gold Healthy Schools Award and is an FA Charter School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that provides good value for money. It is well summed up by the pupil who said, 'Our school is just brilliant'. There are key factors that make this school so successful. The first amongst these is the outstanding quality of leadership provided by the headteacher. He has built a team who work extremely hard to provide the best they can for pupils. They share the headteacher's vision to develop the whole child. The attitude of the staff is captured in the remark made by the deputy headteacher when she said, 'good isn't good enough'. These high expectations are at the heart of all the school does. Although planning for improvement is good overall, some of the targets the school sets itself are not specific enough. Consequently, the school cannot easily measure how successful it has been. The school has developed an outstanding curriculum that enriches the lives of the pupils, and is very well tailored to their individual needs. Teaching is also outstanding. The staff plan exciting and interesting lessons that draw the pupils into learning. Because the pupils are keen to learn they make good progress. From a below average starting point the pupils go on to reach above average standards. Assessment in English, mathematics and science is very good and this is used well to set the right work for each group in the class. This is not always the case in other subjects. Some good opportunities and more demanding work are provided to stretch the most able pupils, but this is not the case in all classes and in all subjects. The youngest pupils are offered a good introduction to school and make good progress.

The pupils develop excellent personal and social skills. Behaviour is outstanding and pupils demonstrate exceptionally positive attitudes to school. They make a good contribution to both the local and the wider community. A member of the school council was correct when he said, 'Everybody is different, but we all get along really well.' The school listens to what pupils have to say and ensures they are actively involved in school developments. For example, they have had a say in the refurbishment of the toilets, and have helped to improve the quality of the school meals. They have a good understanding of the importance of diet and exercise in keeping themselves healthy. Spiritual development is exceptionally good. The pupils are given excellent opportunities to reflect on their feelings and the curriculum opens their eyes to some of the wonders of the world. The school prayer room is appreciated and used by many pupils. The pupils are safe in school and the staff care for the pupils well. The way the pupils are supported and guided in their academic development is outstanding.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. The strong team work, along with the outstanding leadership and management gives the school good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Be more specific about what it is the school is seeking to achieve, when planning for improvement.
- Be more systematic in the way assessment in the foundation subjects is used, to ensure high achieving pupils build quickly on what they have learned previously.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards in the school are good and improving. When they start at the school pupils have skills and abilities that are below those expected nationally. They make good all round progress in the Reception class and are well prepared for the work in Year 1. Progress

in Years 1 and 2 is good and by the time they are seven, pupils reach standards that are generally above average.

This good progress continues in Years 3 to 6 and pupils leave the school with standards that are above those reached by pupils nationally. The school gives a high priority to the development of speaking and listening skills. This serves the pupils very well and enables them to make very good progress in English. The standard of speaking and listening in the school is high. Some groups are making particularly good progress and perform better than similar pupils at other schools. These are: pupils entitled to free school meals; those from minority ethnic groups; those learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Standards and progress in science are satisfactory. The school is taking decisive action to improve this aspect of its work and there are signs that progress in science is accelerating.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well being are outstanding. The school sets out to develop the whole child and is extremely successful in doing this. Pupils are mature, sensible and behave outstandingly well in and around the school. They thoroughly enjoy all aspects of school and find it hard to identify things they would like to improve. They particularly like their lessons and the many school clubs, and one boy said, 'I think our school is brilliant'.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to reflect and consider the needs of others. Pupils have an excellent understanding of their place in both the school and the wider community. They are working hard to achieve the school target of raising 1,000 pounds for CAFOD this year, and are rightly proud of the 700 pounds they have raised to date. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthily. They have a strong commitment to exercise and many appreciate the improved school meals. Unfortunately, some pupils do not bring healthy food to school in their lunch boxes. The school prepares the pupils well for the next stage in their education and later life. They develop good basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), and the older pupils have good opportunities to organise events such as the science day and stalls for school fairs and fetes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants work extremely well together to plan interesting activities that are very well matched to the needs of the pupils in English, mathematics and science. Good challenge is offered to the more able pupils in some subjects in some lessons but not in all. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and excellent use is made of ICT to support the learning. This captures the imagination of the pupils extremely well and enables them to concentrate and make good progress. Behaviour management is excellent. Because teachers are very positive with pupils, they have high self esteem and are very keen to have a go and do their best. Many opportunities are created for pupils to talk about their work and explain their thinking. The way in which pupils are involved in assessing their own progress is good and developing very well. One boy new to the school said, 'It's good here because the teachers challenge you to do well.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum. Three years ago the school made a conscious decision to change the curriculum to make it more lively and interesting for the pupils. Decisions were also made to give a high priority to enriching the curriculum through visits and themed weeks, and to focus on speaking and listening as a way to raise standards. This strategy has worked exceptionally well. The curriculum is now very rich, exciting and highly motivating. The curriculum is the main reason why pupils' personal development is outstanding and standards are rising. The school takes every opportunity to involve the pupils in competitions and activities including working with other schools. This broadens the pupils' horizons, and gives them things to talk and write about. For example, pupils have recently been making a film about healthy eating and greatly enjoyed watching this being screened at the local cinema. The good range of school clubs and activities is much enjoyed and the residential experience makes a positive contribution to the pupils' social development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care guidance and support are outstanding. Everyone at the school has the best interests of the pupils at heart and supervision throughout the day is very good. Arrangements to ensure people working at the school are suitable to work with children are in place. Staff receive regular training on how to keep pupils safe and there are a good number of staff who have first aid qualifications. The pupils say they feel very safe in school. They feel there is very little bullying and value the fact that they can speak to staff or write a note in the 'sad box' if they have a concern. The quality of guidance pupils receive on what they need to do to improve is outstanding. The school's approach to target setting is working very well and is driving up standards. Pupils are very clear about their targets and the staff ensure they have very good opportunities to assess how well they are doing for themselves. Their targets are all in their books and the pupils have a very clear understanding how the system works. Teachers mark the pupils' work very well and offer clear and helpful guidance to pupils on what they need to do next to improve. Partnerships with parents are good. The school has a good reputation in the community and is well regarded by parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher has a clear and determined approach to providing the best possible education for the pupils. He has built a team who share his vision for the school. Together they have made excellent progress in developing the curriculum to meet the particular needs of the pupils. Some of the targets the school sets itself, however, are not as sharp as they could be. The school is very rigorous in the way it checks on the progress each pupil is making. The staff are very honest with each other when things are not as good as they should be. Team leaders take prompt action to provide help and support where staff or pupils are having difficulties.

A group of experienced governors have a very clear view of how the school is doing. They offer good support and challenge to the school.

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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?	1
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	2
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	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

28 March 2007

Dear Children

The Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Beaconsfield Street, Nottingham. NG7 6FL.

Thank you all very much for making me feel so welcome in your school when I visited recently. I was really impressed with you all and the way you were very happy to tell me about your school. Like you, I think your school is really good, in fact, I think it is outstanding. There are so many good things to report about your school. Here are the main ones.

- Mr McGowan and the other teachers work very hard to keep you all safe and they do the best they can to help you improve your work. Because they do this, you all make good progress.
- The teachers are really good at making your lessons interesting and fun. They mark your work well and set good targets for you to aim to reach.
- There are lots of visits and out of school activities for you to get involved with. Some of you have even been involved in making a film about healthy eating. You know about how to stay healthy, but a few of you do not always bring healthy food to school in your lunch boxes.
- The school helps you to gain confidence in yourselves and you all have excellent attitudes to learning. I know this, because I saw you all working hard in school and your behaviour was excellent.

Even the best schools can get better and your school tries to do just that. I have asked the school to do two things. The first is to set clearer targets for what it is trying to improve so it can tell if it has been successful or not. The second is to develop the way it keeps records of what you can do in every subject so that extra work can be set for those of you who are doing well. This already happens sometimes, but I am asking the school to try and do this in all subjects.

I had a lovely time at St Mary's. I can see why you all like the school so much. Good luck for the future and I hope you manage to collect the 1,000 pounds for CAFOD . I think you will do it.

Yours sincerely

Andy McDowall Her Majesty's Inspector