

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123554
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	292709
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Brian Holmes

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	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Coonan
Headteacher	John Gilbert
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002
School address	New Park Road Castlefields Shrewsbury SY1 2SP
Telephone number	01743 351032
Fax number	01743 351032

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St. Mary's is a smaller than average primary school in Shrewsbury. Pupils travel from all over the town, and up to eighteen miles in distance, because of the school's distinctive Catholic ethos, and numbers are increasing. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and those from minority ethnic backgrounds are below average. There is an above average number of learners with difficulties or disabilities. Pupil mobility is higher than average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an improving school that currently provides a satisfactory quality of education. There are a number of good features, including the quality of its provision for pupils' care, guidance and support along with their personal development and well-being. It has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. It has a sound capacity to make further improvements. The headteacher and all the staff are fully committed to improving achievement and pupils' personal development further. The leadership and management are satisfactory and improving, and have a clear vision for the school. Systems for checking pupils' performance and raising their achievement are good and are beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' achievement.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. It is on an upward trend. In the Foundation Stage, children enter school with skills below the level expected. They make good progress and most are on target to achieve the goals expected of them at the end of Reception, with a small number of children likely to exceed them. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory progress and attain standards that are broadly in line with what is expected in both English and mathematics. In the last twelve months, standards of more able pupils have improved, as have standards in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress and achieve well because of the support they receive. For those pupils with statements of educational need, the support is outstanding because of the challenging targets they are set and the close involvement of parents and other agencies in planning and checking the effectiveness of the support.

One factor that is helping achievement to improve is pupils' good levels of personal development and well-being. There are strong systems of care and support for pupils. As parents commented, 'the school has a family feel' and 'a lovely atmosphere of calmness and happiness'. This strong ethos of care and support helps pupils to feel safe and secure at the school and to develop as confident learners. They enjoy going to school and have positive attitudes to their learning. They enjoy a healthy lifestyle at school and make a positive contribution to its life and that of the wider community. Pupils enjoy good access to the opportunities that the school offers, particularly for those with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The quality of teaching and learning and the curricular provision are both satisfactory. Adults and pupils have good relationships and pupils are managed well. The academic guidance that pupils receive has recently improved and is satisfactory. All pupils have targets for English and mathematics and these are checked regularly by their teachers. There has been a strong focus on assessment and marking, but pupils are not yet sufficiently involved in the assessment of their own work in order to know what to do to improve their work. The curriculum meets all requirements and is being adjusted to meet the needs and abilities of all pupils. As yet, there are insufficient opportunities in some subjects, such as history and geography, for pupils to apply their literacy skills and improve their writing through these subjects.

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.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide pupils with more opportunities to apply their writing skills in a range of subjects

- Ensure that all pupils are fully informed about what they need to do next to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupil achievement is satisfactory. Children's attainment on entry is below what is expected. Children make good progress in the Reception and most reach the goals expected by the start of Year 1, with a small number of children on course to exceed them. In Key Stage 1, pupils make satisfactory progress and attain standards that are broadly in line with the average in reading, writing and mathematics.

In Key Stage 2, there is higher than average pupil mobility and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is higher than in Key Stage 1. Despite this, pupils maintain their satisfactory progress and attain standards broadly in line with the average expected by the end of Year 6. Strategies introduced to raise attainment in mathematics and for more able girls have been implemented effectively and are beginning to have a positive effect on these pupils' achievement. The current Year 6 group are on track to achieve the challenging targets set for them in both English and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress and achieve well because of the good individual support for their learning by the adults in school and the challenging targets they are set.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well and enjoy coming to school, as is shown by their above average attendance. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and help the pupils to become confident learners. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are all good. As a result, they grow into thoughtful and responsible pupils who contribute positively to the life of the school through the class and school councils. Every year group has a voice on the school council and its members actively participate in making decisions, such as requesting the recently installed bike shed. Older pupils show concern for others in school. They take care of younger ones at lunch breaks and, through charity work, they raise their awareness of the wider world. Pupils are also involved in local community events, including those at Shrewsbury Abbey. Pupils move to the next stage of their education with confidence, supported by good social skills and sound literacy and numeracy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but there are examples of good and outstanding teaching. Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage, where there are very good relationships and thorough planning builds well on children's prior learning to provide them with a good range of activities.

Behaviour is managed well in all classes. There are appropriate levels of challenge for pupils of different abilities. In numeracy lessons, pupils of all abilities are challenged to solve problems and to undertake investigations. These strategies have a positive effect on pupils' attitudes and they respond with interest and enthusiasm. Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils, particularly those with difficulties or disabilities. Sometimes pupils are not clear about

the work set for them and this affects the pace of their learning. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is thorough and where it is good, for example in Year 5, it gives pupils guidance on what to do next to improve their work, but this is not the same in every class. Not all pupils are sufficiently aware of what they need to do next to achieve their targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has identified problem-solving as a key weakness in mathematics and the work done to address this is beginning to have a positive effect. In literacy, there is an appropriate emphasis on composition but there are too few opportunities in subjects such as history and geography for pupils to apply their literacy skills to reinforce and improve their writing.

There is good enrichment of the curriculum through after-school clubs and educational visits, including a residential visit to Wales. Pupils enjoy the experiences and remember those visits with considerable affection. Year 6 pupils enjoy German lessons in a link with a local secondary school. The school adapts the curriculum effectively to meet the needs of all its pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet all current requirements, and procedures are followed rigorously. The support for pupils with statements of special educational need is outstanding because of the school's close liaison with parents and other agencies in planning the support and checking its effectiveness. The school works very closely with parents and outside agencies for the benefit of its pupils. The good quality of care underpins the calm and positive learning environment and creates a strong sense of safety and well-being in the pupils.

The academic guidance given to pupils has recently improved. Pupils receive feedback through the marking of their work and all pupils have targets for English and mathematics which most of them know and understand. However, not all pupils are sufficiently involved in the assessment of their own work to know how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

A strength of the leadership and management is the teamwork of the staff. This teamwork stems from the clear vision of the headteacher and the commitment of the staff towards the pupils. The leadership team has developed a school where all pupils are equally valued and supported. This results in all pupils having full access to the opportunities that the school offers. Through effective self-evaluation and improved systems for checking pupils' performance, achievement is steadily improving. Pupils' progress towards achieving their targets is regularly checked by teachers. This information is used by the leadership team to identify specific groups of pupils who need support or additional challenge in their work. Despite some work on improving the role of subject leaders, the full impact of the improvements they have put in place is yet to be seen.

The governing body fulfils its duties satisfactorily and is sufficiently involved in checking the work of the school through its committees and visits into school by governors. Parents have extremely positive views and are very supportive of the work of the school.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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	2
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	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	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?	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?	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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

4 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, Shrewsbury, SY1 2SP

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and listening to what you had to say about the school. We know that you are proud of your school and enjoy going there. We think that St. Mary's Catholic Primary is a satisfactory and improving school, with some strengths.

These are the main things we found out that your school does well:

- you behave well and have good attitudes to your learning
- you get on well with each other and all the adults in school
- the school provides you with interesting activities to help you learn and a lot of extra clubs which you like going to
- your teachers take good care to keep you safe and healthy and to support your learning
- the adults in charge of the school are working hard as a team to make the school better.

In order to make the education you receive at school better, we have asked the headteacher and the rest of the staff to:

- give you more opportunities to do writing in other subjects as well as English
- help you to know what to do to improve your work.

You can help your teachers by behaving as well as you can and working hard to do your best all the time.

Best Wishes

Brian Holmes

Lead inspector