

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 123556 |
| Local Authority | Telford and Wrekin |
| Inspection number | 292710 |
| Inspection dates | 20–21 June 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Mary Hamby HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 99 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Kate Anderson |
| Headteacher | Margaret Young |
| Date of previous school inspection | 8 June 2005 |
| School address | Coronation Crescent Madeley Telford TF7 5EJ |
| Telephone number | 01952 580954 |
| Fax number | 01952 580954 |

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This small school draws its pupils from a wide area. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. There have been changes of staffing since the last inspection and the school has experienced difficulty with the recruitment and retention of staff. However, although two of the five teachers are currently on long-term sick leave, there are signs of improved stability in the staffing. The school is receiving support from the local authority to help raise standards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school is satisfactory with some good features. It is improving, but the pace of improvement has been slowed by staff absence and difficulties in recruitment in the past two years. Most parents are pleased with what the school provides and are strongly supportive of its aims and how their children are cared for. However, a few parents express concern about the level of staff change and how it has affected their children's progress.

Standards in most subjects are close to the average, but standards in writing are not good enough throughout the school. Achievement in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is satisfactory overall. Good progress is evident when the pupils have experienced the continuity of teaching by permanent members of staff. Achievement through the Reception Year is good because expectations of the children are high and there are effective systems to help them settle well and enjoy school.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Staff relate well to their pupils and lessons are usually lively and interesting. However, assessment is not used effectively to set work at the right level for some pupils and marking does not give the pupils enough indication of how they can improve. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is enriched by clubs and educational visits, but there are not enough links between subjects so that pupils can practise their basic skills.

The school provides a high level of care for its pupils and this creates a secure and warm atmosphere for learning. The pupils are treated fairly and their individual talents are celebrated well. This is particularly valuable to pupils who learn at a slower rate and gives these pupils the confidence to succeed. Pupils' personal development is good. Relationships within the school are positive; pupils behave well and are developing into responsible youngsters.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The determination of the headteacher has been a key factor in keeping the school on track. She leads the school enthusiastically, has high expectations for the school community and is rigorous in her approach to evaluating its strengths and weaknesses. She is supported well by the governing body, who have a good overview of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing.
- Raise the quality of teaching by ensuring that marking is more purposeful in all subjects and information from assessment is used to set the right level of challenge for all pupils.
- Refine the curriculum to include more opportunity for pupils to apply their skills in a range of 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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When the children enter school their attainment is lower than expected levels. They settle quickly and achieve well through their Reception Year in all areas of learning. This good progress helps them to start Year 1 at a similar level to most other five-year-olds.

In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, standards have improved over the last few years and are now similar to the national average. However, standards in writing are lower than they should be. Writing is not developed to sufficient length and some work is marred by poor presentation and erratic spelling.

Achievement is satisfactory, although there are small pockets of underachievement when pupils are not given challenging enough work. This is more often the case for more capable pupils, who mark time during whole-class sessions. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are supported well and they make steady progress towards their targets. Achievement varies through the school and is much better when the pupils have had the continuity of being taught by a permanent member of staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils are well behaved, and their enjoyment of school is clear to see. They like school and attendance is good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The religious character of the school helps pupils to understand how to put Christian values into practice and opportunities to study different faiths help them to be tolerant youngsters. The pupils say how much they value opportunities to express themselves creatively in music and painting but would like to engage more in practical and investigative work.

The pupils have a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle and know the importance of a balanced diet. Boys and girls cooperate well and work effectively in groups when the occasion arises. They enjoy contributing to the wider community through activities such as fundraising and entertaining the elderly, but do not yet have enough regular opportunity to do routine jobs around the school. They enjoy opportunities to learn skills such as those provided by the recent gardening project, which will prepare them for life beyond school. School councillors are exerting increasing influence on their community and understand how to make decisions in a fair way.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The staff work well as a team and a strong feature of the teaching throughout the school is the warmth of relationships at all levels. This makes lessons enjoyable occasions where the achievement of pupils of all abilities is celebrated and rewarded. Lessons are usually conducted at a brisk pace and the staff make very good use of a wide range of resources at their disposal.

Teachers share the learning objective of the lesson with their pupils so that they know what they are expected to learn. Marking in English books is good, but written work in other subjects receives too little attention and this impedes progress in writing. Assessment is being used more carefully to plan new learning, but some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do. The pupils are starting to become involved in assessing their learning, but this is at an early stage and not enough is expected of them in re-drafting and correcting their own work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The strong focus on basic skills has contributed to rising standards over the last few years. Better provision for information and communication technology has also had a positive impact on learning and the pupils' enjoyment of school. Links between subjects are developing, but opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their skills in a range of contexts are not yet frequent enough. In particular, pupils do not have enough opportunity to write for a range of different purposes or develop their skills progressively as they move through the school. The curriculum for children in Reception is satisfactory, although opportunities for play in the outside area are more limited.

There is a wide range of clubs and activities beyond lessons that enhance learning and pupils' enjoyment of school. Opportunities for competitive sports and visits to places of interest help the pupils to develop team skills and broaden their appreciation of culture.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The strong Catholic ethos of the school provides a firm foundation for the care shown to all its pupils. This is apparent at all levels, from the headteacher, who provides an inspirational model of care and support, to the affection shown to pupils by the school secretary, who waves pupils off with a smile if they have to leave school early. This sense of community helps the pupils to feel that they belong to 'one big family,' as one pupil said; others share his views and know that they can turn to any member of staff if they are worried.

The school has good contacts with a range of professionals to support vulnerable pupils, and procedures in school are well thought out to help these pupils with their work. Links with the high schools are good and so transfers to the next schools are smooth. Academic guidance is developing well. There are secure systems in place to track the pupils' progress regularly in literacy and numeracy. However, not all staff use this information effectively, especially in terms of setting challenging work for the more able pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher's resilient leadership has kept the school on track despite staffing difficulties which could have taken it off course. Prolonged staff absence has been a continuing difficulty for the school, but the headteacher has sought advice and made sensible decisions to bring stability to teaching and learning. This is becoming effective, but the legacy of staff absence has affected the progress of some groups of pupils. She has been the driving force behind the strong sense of teamwork and the positive climate for learning in the school which make the building a happy place in which to learn and work.

There have been improvements to how pupils' progress is checked and teachers have a stake in sharing leadership and management responsibilities. However, staff absence and change have affected the continuity and development of their leadership roles. Some subject leaders are very new to their responsibilities and are not yet fully effective in their roles, but they are a willing team. They have embraced the good advice given by the local authority to bring about improvement since the last inspection.

Governors take their stewardship of the school seriously and are very supportive of the headteacher's vision for the school. They have been flexible and realistic in staff appointments, despite their desire to have a strong Catholic presence amongst the staff. The governors and staff share a commitment to progress, and this teamwork approach gives the school sound capacity for further improvement.

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

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| 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

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| 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

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| 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

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| 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

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| 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

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 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 | 2 |
| 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 | 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

22 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Telford, TF7 5EJ

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to meet you this week. I have written a report that says your school is 'satisfactory'. This means it has some good things and just a few areas where it could be better.

I was very pleased to see how well behaved you were and was glad to hear that you like school. Your parents are pleased with your school, especially the way that all the staff take care of you and get to know you so well. I agree with them and think that this a good feature of your school. The care you receive helps you to feel confident and develop well as young citizens of the future. It was good to see that you are making healthy choices and that you enjoy sport and the arts.

The children in Reception get off to a flying start and settle in well. In all classes lessons are interesting and enable most of you to learn at a steady pace. In most subjects you are doing fine, but your writing is not as good as it should be. You can help improve this by trying as hard as you can by learning your spellings, writing neatly, and really thinking about the topic you are writing about. The teachers mark your English books well, but do not give you enough comments in your other books. I have asked them to do this so that your written work can improve. I have also asked the teachers to check up on your learning and make sure that you all have hard enough work to do.

I have set the staff a challenge to give you more chance to practise the skills you learn in English and mathematics lessons in other subjects. This will help you to understand how to use your skills and see how useful they are.

Remember to always try your best. Best wishes from Mrs Hamby