



St Marys Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 124316
Local Authority Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number 292955
Inspection date 19 September 2006
Reporting inspector Barbara Crane

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Ford Green Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Norton-le-Moors
Age range of pupils	3-11		Stoke-on-Trent ST6 8EZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 234820
Number on roll (school)	223	Fax number	01782 234820
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Simon Edge
		Headteacher	Margaret Yates
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001		

Age group 3-11	Inspection date 19 September 2006	Inspection number 292955
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Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is an average-sized school situated on the outskirts of Stoke-on-Trent. While the number of families claiming free school meals is average, pupils' families face some social and economic challenges. An average number of pupils have learning difficulties. Most pupils come from a White British background, with a few pupils coming from other ethnic groups. Children's attainment when they start at the school is below average. Half of the teachers have changed in the last two years, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Parents and pupils are understandably proud of St Mary's. It is an outstanding school that provides its pupils with a first-rate start to their education and gives excellent value for money. Standards have shown a marked improvement over the past two years and are now above average. Pupils' achievement is outstanding. This is because the school's leadership and management have focused closely on improving areas of teaching and learning and have set high targets for pupils' achievement, which are met. All pupils do particularly well in reading, mathematics and science. Good provision in the Nursery and Reception classes means that children enjoy learning from their earliest days at school. Good teaching throughout the school engages pupils' interest and mainly ensures that pupils know what they are aiming for. The outstanding quality of teaching in Years 5 and 6 gives pupils' progress an extra boost because expectations here are consistently high. Pupils of all ages who need extra help get it quickly and so pupils with learning difficulties make exceptional progress.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They flourish because of the very high level of care, guidance and support provided by the staff. Teachers and pupils respect each other and enjoy being together. Pupils of all ages are keen to start the day and they relish what it holds for them because there are so many exciting things to do. As one parent said, 'My child goes into school smiling and comes out smiling.' Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they know how to keep safe and healthy. They enjoy growing up together and taking on more responsibility as they get older. The outstanding curriculum is very carefully planned to nurture pupils' different gifts and talents and so pupils are eager to learn.

Outstanding leadership and management ensure that the school is relentless in its search for providing the best for its pupils. Inspirational leadership by the headteacher is central to the school's success and the staff and parents are fully in accord with her vision for the school. Very effective checks are made to find out where things are working well and what should be better. The support for new staff is very effective so that they quickly become part of the team. Governors are fully involved in this process and are consequently able to provide the school with excellent support for its improvement. The school meticulously carries through its planning to improve and has improving writing as a current priority. Its work in raising standards in other areas is testimony to its capacity to bring about change for the better and the school has made outstanding improvement since the previous inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Seek further improvements in the achievement of more-able pupils in writing and ensure that teachers' marking gives better guidance on which aspects need to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' progress is outstanding, as is their achievement. From a lower-than-average starting point, pupils reach above-average standards by the time they leave the school. By the time pupils start in Year 1, they have made good progress and reach the goals for their age in all areas of learning. The oldest pupils' performance in core subjects had been steadily declining but picked up dramatically in 2005 because the school intervened to improve individuals' progress. The results for Year 2 pupils in 2005 were above average and were average for Year 6 pupils. However, a third of Year 6 pupils had learning difficulties. Results for 2006 are higher and indicate that standards are above average for both key stages. The school's assessments of other year groups show that pupils are also reaching good standards. Within this picture, however, achievement for more-able pupils in writing is weaker and, although their overall progress is good, it does not match that in other areas. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve very well because of outstanding teaching.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are supremely well prepared for the future and face it with confidence. They lead active lives, eat healthily and know what to do to keep themselves and others safe. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their strong sense of self-worth is reflected when they say that 'everyone here is special'. They enjoy learning about different cultures, for example, through links with a school in China. Pupils' excellent behaviour reflects their good judgement about what is right and wrong. They keep to the rules because they have been involved in creating them and so see the sense that lies behind them. Pupils of all ages and backgrounds get on extremely well together. Politeness and respect for others are qualities that develop from the earliest years and the oldest pupils are very confident and mature in their outlook. They say that their first responsibility is to be 'models for younger children because they will copy us.' The School Council plays a full part in deciding on improvements and pupils appreciate the equipment that it has provided on the playground.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching permeates the school. Teachers enjoy their work and willingly embrace new ideas. Teaching assistants provide good quality support. There have been considerable changes in staff over recent years but newcomers, as well as those who have changed year group, have been very well supported so that they know how to improve pupils' rate of learning. Teaching for the Nursery and Reception children takes

good account of the needs of young children and provides a firm platform for future success. Teaching throughout the school is particularly effective in promoting pupils' speaking and listening, reading and mathematics, reflecting the school's focus on these areas in the past two years. Teachers' skills in these areas are finely honed and lead to pupils' rapid progress. In writing, expectations are not as consistently high for more-able pupils as they should be and the pace of pupils' progress does not match that of other areas. Pupils are sometimes slow to get started on writing because expectations of the pace of work are not sharp enough and marking does not consistently set out points for improvement. Outstanding teaching in Years 5 and 6 boosts pupils' progress further because the expected work rate is made very clear. Teaching for pupils with learning difficulties is outstanding and leads to pupils' very rapid progress towards their targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum means that pupils enjoy learning, make rapid progress in their work and grow as well-rounded young people. Parents and pupils appreciate the very wide range of activities that takes place both in and out of normal lessons. Pupils benefit from links with other schools to provide specialist classes in sport, dance and music. The school is innovative in its approach; for example, every pupil in Year 2 last year was taught to play the violin and pupils are proud of their success. Pupils work well with computers and Year 4 pupils talk enthusiastically about their visit to a local secondary school when they produced an animated film. Residential visits and events such as the Business Enterprise Week help pupils to learn about healthy lifestyles and economic factors affecting the community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils know who to turn to if they face problems in their work or daily lives. This is because of the outstanding level of care, guidance and support provided by the staff, who know the pupils very well and are mindful of their individual needs. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are very robust and effective. Vulnerable children are given sensitive support that promotes their progress very well. Pupils know what their academic targets are and these are shared with parents. Targets are frequently reviewed so that pupils know how well they are doing. The quality of the hot meals provided at lunchtime is highly regarded by parents and pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding and ensure that the school's strong Catholic ethos is upheld and that pupils do their best in their work. The school is too modest in its evaluation of its effectiveness. A great deal has been achieved in a short time and the improvements in standards and teaching have been sustained because

everyone is pulling in the same direction under the dynamic leadership of the headteacher. The deputy head provides high quality support for improvement. Difficulties with staffing have been very well managed and effective teams have been created. Monitoring of teaching and analysis of data are used very well to identify the right priorities for improvement. Consequently, the school is in an excellent position to move forward because it knows where it is going next and how it will get there. Previous initiatives to improve aspects of handwriting, reading and mathematics were carried through diligently and difficulties have been successfully resolved. Governors are well informed and know why the school has established particular priorities. They visit the school to check on how well it is doing. There is an excellent relationship with parents, who have full confidence in the school. Parents' views are sought and acted upon, for example, in providing opportunities to support families to better understand initiatives in teaching mathematics.

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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?	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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

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?	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.

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	1
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	1
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

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I enjoyed meeting and talking with you and you were a great help to me in my work. You are lucky to have such a brilliant start to your school life and play a big part in making it such a special place. I can see why you and your parents are so pleased that you go there. The staff work hard because they want the best for you. These are the things that I found are best about your school.

- You are very well-behaved young people who love school, know how to keep safe and healthy and enjoy being together.
- Good teaching means that you want to learn and do very well in your work, especially in Years 5 and 6, so that you reach standards that are above average.
- You enjoy helping to make your school and community a better place for everyone.
- The grown-ups take very good care of you and give you extra help if you need it.
- The people in charge of the school know what they need to do to make the school even better for you.

We have asked your teachers to make sure that:

- You all know how to improve your writing, especially those of you who are already good at it.

You can help your teachers to do this by getting down your ideas more quickly. Keep on enjoying your time at school and those wonderful school dinners! I wish you the very best in the future.