



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124784
Local Authority SUFFOLK
Inspection number 293113
Inspection dates 28–29 November 2006
Reporting inspector John Messer

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Woodbridge Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Ipswich
Age range of pupils	4–11		Suffolk IP4 4BA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01473 728372
Number on roll (school)	215	Fax number	01473 716893
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr P Febvre
		Headteacher	Mrs M Etheridge
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 28–29 November 2006	Inspection number 293113
--------------------------	--	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A fifth are from minority ethnic families. A few speak languages other than English and a small number are at an early stage of learning to speak English. Attainment on entry to the school is slightly above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. The curriculum is excellent. It is relevant to pupils' needs and is supplemented by a very good range of extra activities. Music in the school is outstanding. Singing is excellent and the orchestra performs brilliantly. Pupils enjoy school and are bubbling with enthusiasm for learning. Behaviour is excellent and pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils are self-assured and discuss their work thoughtfully. Extremely good foundations are laid for their future learning and working lives. Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school. They have an exceptionally good understanding of how to eat sensibly, stay healthy and keep fit.

Teaching and learning are good. Children settle happily in the Nursery and the good teaching in the Foundation Stage helps them to achieve well. Standards are above average by the end of the Reception year. Teaching is good in Years 1 to 6 and pupils achieve well. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance and this is a key factor in enabling pupils to attain high standards. Another is the strong support for learning provided by parents. Pupils have clear targets to aim at in literacy that help them to improve their performance. However, they do not have such clear targets in numeracy. This is the main reason why, although progress is mostly good in Years 3 to 6, it is better in literacy than in numeracy. The national assessments at the end of Year 2 showed that pupils attained standards that were exceptionally high in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Standards are significantly above average by Year 6. The results of national tests for pupils in Year 6 showed that results were exceptionally high in English. Pupils read widely and the quality of their writing is outstanding. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are above average.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher sets high standards, creating a highly successful school. Technology has been introduced to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Each classroom is equipped with an interactive white board and there is a good computer suite. Teachers are receiving good training in the use of this equipment. The school still has some way to go to develop the full potential of technology to enrich teaching and learning. The overwhelming majority of parents are pleased with the education provided for their children. Governors work closely with staff and monitor the school's performance thoroughly. Finances are managed well and the school provides good value for money. The school is analytical and its self-evaluation is mostly accurate. It has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Set clear targets for pupils to aim at in numeracy.
- Develop the use of ICT so that it is used more effectively to improve teaching and learning further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All groups of pupils, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak languages other than English, achieve well. Children's achievement in the Foundation Stage is good and children are on course to attain most of the early learning goals by the end of the school year. Pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is good in Years 1 and 2 and they attain high standards. Pupils make good progress overall in Years 3 to 6 but it is uneven. Progress is better in English than in mathematics. By the time they leave the school, pupils attain particularly high standards in English. Pupils write with great sensitivity. Part of a poem written by a pupil in Year 4 personifies spring:

'He doesn't choose sides for war is his nemesis. Why, oh why, he thinks did the world of evil dawn For all he wants to bloom is eternal, hopeful life.'

Pupils sing beautifully and many play instruments. They develop a good range of skills in ICT and use computers confidently.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Excellent relationships between staff and pupils foster personal development exceptionally well. Pupils say that learning is fun. Although there is a serious, business-like approach to learning, lessons are also laced with good humour. Pupils work and play happily together and laughter often rings through the school. One group spent playtime refining and acting a play that had been written during lessons. Attendance is consistently above average. Pupils have an extremely good awareness of how to lead healthy lifestyles. Pupils in Year 6 demonstrate exceptionally high levels of responsibility around the school and play-leaders distribute the play equipment and contribute greatly to a calm and purposeful lunch time. The school council is well organised and makes a genuine impact on the life of the school. Its suggestions for improving school uniform for younger pupils were fully implemented.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and well supported by the strong Christian ethos within the school. Pupils learn about a wide range of faiths and cultures. They are sensitive to the needs of others and provide financial support to charities. Pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of education and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance. When a talented pupil in Year 6 had produced a brilliant piece of writing it was marked with many suggestions about

how to make it even better next time. In many lessons the recently installed interactive white boards are already being used effectively to bring learning more alive. In Year 4 pupils are studying 'Goodnight Mr Tom'. The text was made to live with a clip from the film. Motivation is high and pupils are acutely attentive. A talented team of teaching assistants makes a valuable contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities receive good support and make good progress. The headteacher has rightly identified that more creativity in teaching is needed if it is to become outstanding.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

There is a strong emphasis on teaching English, mathematics and science. Creative and performing arts are well represented, together with sport, philosophy, French, personal, social and health education, thinking skills, relaxation techniques and massage, with the result that pupils receive a well-rounded education. Provision for music is outstanding. Taught by a specialist music teacher, the quality of singing and musical composition is awesome. Specialist teaching, in association with a local sports partnership, is just one of a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is enriched by many opportunities to visit places of interest. Visiting artists during 'Art Week' and authors during 'Book Week' inspire pupils and extend their skills and knowledge.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils say they enjoy school greatly, feel safe and know whom to turn to if they have any worries. Some classes have a 'worry box' where pupils can post any concerns they may have about their learning or their relationships with others. Pupils say that there is no bullying and that any poor behaviour is dealt with quickly and effectively. Arrangements for ensuring pupils' health, safety and welfare are effective. Child protection arrangements are in place and are understood by all staff. In English pupils have a clear map of what they need to be able to do to reach the next stages in their learning as well as targets to help them. A similar system is not in place for mathematics. Consequently, children are not fully aware of the direction of their learning in mathematics and have no clear targets to help them. This is one reason why progress is not as rapid in mathematics as in English. Parents wholeheartedly support their children's learning and work closely with the school to help them to make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The governing body, ably led by the chair, monitors the work of the school closely. Governors are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The leadership of the school has been highly successful in generating a commitment from all staff to

raising standards further. Even though standards are high and teaching is good, there is no complacency. Teachers are keen to further improve the quality of their teaching and the use of ICT. They relish opportunities for extra training and to visit other schools as they strive to find ways to extend their skills. Subject leaders are eager to improve standards but some are new and the impact of their initiatives is yet to be fully realised. The school analyses its performance carefully to identify any areas of weakness and it takes rapid action to improve things. When monitoring showed that pupils' progress was not as strong in Years 3 and 4 as it was in Years 5 and 6, for example, the headteacher took effective steps to strengthen teaching in order to achieve more consistently good progress. The headteacher has led the school in developing a culture that promotes a readiness to change accepted practices and develop new initiatives in order to improve the quality of education.

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.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
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	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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
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?	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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

30 November 2006

Dear Children

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Woodbridge Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP4 4BA

What a great school! We thoroughly enjoyed our short visit.

You work hard and you attain good standards in your work. You love reading and you read a wide range of literature. Your writing is particularly powerful. We listened to some beautiful singing and saw many of you playing instruments in the orchestra. You are good at ICT and we saw good little videos that Year 6 had made about their work on the Tudors. You told us that yours is a friendly school and that everybody gets on well together. You are polite and very well behaved. One or two boys are a little silly at times. Perhaps you could encourage them to behave more sensibly? The school council gets things done. The plans for a new playground 'Buddy Stop' is one example of how they listen to your suggestions for improving things. You know how to look after yourselves and stay safe. The teachers work extremely hard to help you to learn as much as possible. You told us that you are 'never forced but always encouraged'. You said that the teachers 'don't go in straight and shout but communicate properly.'

We think that are a few things that should be done to make the school even better. We think that all the new technology that has been introduced, such as the interactive white boards, is great. We think that you should have opportunities in all subjects to use equipment such as computers and digital cameras even more. We also think that the targets you have in literacy really help you to understand what you need to do to reach the next stages in your learning. We think that you should also have clear targets in numeracy.

We know that the school is going to get even better. There are exciting times ahead.

With all best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Messer

(Lead Inspector)