



St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Southam

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 125708
Local Authority Warwickshire
Inspection number 293339
Inspection dates 22–23 November 2006
Reporting inspector Don Mason

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Daventry Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Southam
Age range of pupils	3–11		CV47 1PS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01926 812512
Number on roll (school)	216	Fax number	01926 812521
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Vince Quayle
		Headteacher	Pete Sadler
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	22–23 November 2006	293339

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Almost all the pupils are from White British families. Their attainment on entry to school is average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is average but varies from year to year. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is very low. The school accommodates a before and after school club. A deputy headteacher was appointed to the school in April 2006.

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 a satisfactory and improving school with some good features. The appointment of a deputy headteacher, the restructured senior management team and strong governors have brought new energy to the school and a renewed commitment to improve its performance. Children enter the Nursery with average standards. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and the pupils make satisfactory achievement with strengths in personal and social development. Pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory and standards, as shown in Year 2 and Year 6 national tests, are above average. There has been some underachievement in writing and mathematics in recent years because more able pupils have not always made the progress they should. The latest test results show that the school has had some success in remedying this situation, particularly in mathematics. The quality of teaching is variable but is satisfactory overall. It is improving, as initiatives introduced recently to raise pupils' achievement and enjoyment begin to have an impact. However the improvements are not yet consistently in place across the school. The quality of advice given to pupils through marking, for example, varies from class to class. Measures in place to improve the academic guidance given to pupils are too new to have had a significant impact on pupils' achievement. The satisfactory curriculum helps to ensure that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress in the basic skills and information and communication technology (ICT). It is enriched by a wide range of visits, visitors and sporting activities. Attendance is good. Pupils behave well and are cooperative in class. Their good personal development and well-being are reflected in the care they show towards one another. Pupils say that, 'They all care about each other here. Children stick up for each other.' Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Good relationships between staff and pupils ensure that pupils feel safe, adopt safe practices and know that someone will help them if there is a problem. Links with the Church and activities such as reading partners and fund raising projects enable pupils to make a good contribution to the school and to the wider community. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and improving. The new deputy headteacher and other senior staff, fully supported by the headteacher, are bringing about improvements which are already having an impact on pupils' achievement and enjoyment. Good assessment procedures are now in place but the school recognises that it needs to make better use of the information to set challenging targets for improvement. Governors are closely involved with all aspects of the school's development and are able to ask searching questions about the school's performance. The school's capacity to improve is good. Recent improvements in the progress made by higher attaining pupils, and in mathematics generally, are an indication of this.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that recently introduced measures to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in writing and mathematics, are implemented consistently across the school.

- Ensure that the senior leadership team make rigorous use of assessment information to set challenging targets for improvement so that all pupils achieve as well as possible.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter the Nursery with average levels of attainment. Most leave the Foundation Stage at the expected national levels. They make good progress in their social and emotional development and satisfactory progress overall. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 to achieve above average standards at the end of Year 2. The latest test results show a dip to below average standards, but achievement was nevertheless good. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress in science and reading. They make satisfactory progress in writing and mathematics because some more able pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Standards, at the end of Year 6, are above average in science and mathematics but average in English. Good teaching in Years 5 and 6 and effective 'Booster' classes for Year 6 pupils are leading to a rapid improvement in pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6. Recent test results show good improvement in mathematics and some improvement in writing but the school recognises that more needs to be done to improve achievement further.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development is reflected in their confident and friendly demeanour. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is good. The link with a school in Senegal and visits from the local authority's multicultural group help the pupils in coming to a good understanding of other cultures. Clear guidelines and frequent praise from staff help pupils to behave well. Pupils' good attendance is an indication of their enjoyment of school. However some pupils arrive late at school and this is not monitored. Many pupils take enthusiastic advantage of the sports opportunities available to them including swimming. Pupils are made aware of potential dangers but their understanding of road safety and how to keep themselves safe could be better developed, for example through improved management of the car park and access to the school. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of healthy lifestyles. They are enthusiastic about their involvement in a recycling project in order to help their environment. Members of the school council are keen to play their role in improving their school and are capable of making effective decisions but are given too little opportunity to do so. Teachers, particularly in Years 5 and 6, are making good progress in providing pupils with opportunities to work together in teams, discussing ideas and making decisions together. These are skills that will serve them well in the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning varies from satisfactory to good with outstanding features. It is satisfactory overall. It is improving as teachers make better use of assessment information to ensure that work set for pupils matches their needs. Pupil and teacher relationships are good and clear routines in classes ensure that pupils settle quickly to their work. Writing is improving because teachers are stimulating the pupils' interest more effectively and preparing them well for the writing activity. An emphasis on practical work in mathematics and giving pupils opportunities to explain their thinking is leading to greater progress in this subject. However, the improvement measures which have been introduced are not yet consistently applied across the school. Sometimes, for example, opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills are missed. The work set is not always challenging enough and occasionally pupils struggle with their work because the teacher has not fully explained what they have to do to make improvements. Effective support from teachers' assistants ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make at least as much progress as other pupils. The work of teachers' assistants generally is a strength of the school. One makes a good contribution to the teaching of ICT to the older pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils satisfactorily. It is improving because a new method of planning the curriculum is helping teachers to provide more creative, meaningful and interesting activities. This is leading to improved pupil achievement, particularly in mathematics and English. However more able pupils would benefit from more challenging activities. Good sporting activities including swimming competitions, visits to art galleries, dance and drama lessons and science theme days are examples of the wide variety of activities that promote pupils' learning in and out of the classroom. A large number of pupils play instruments and there are good opportunities to take part in musical activities. Pupils enjoy the practical work in science and design and technology, and examples of good artwork are displayed around the school. Work on fire safety and drugs awareness helps to promote pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. The school is currently undertaking the healthy school's audit in an effort to improve its provision in this area. In the Foundation Stage teachers provide a wide range of stimulating and creative opportunities enabling children to enjoy their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

In this caring, supportive and inclusive school pupils feel happy and safe and they grow in self-confidence. In the 'Rainbow' group children take part in activities which

promote their self-esteem and sense of security at times of emotional difficulty. Learners at risk are identified at an early stage and arrangements put in place to support them. The impact of the satisfactory support provided for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities needs to be monitored more rigorously and consistently to ensure that they are making the best progress possible. Policies to ensure pupils' safety are securely in place but they need to be reviewed more frequently to ensure that all staff are fully familiar with their requirements. Systems to check pupils' progress through the year, as well as at the end of the year, are being established. They are beginning to provide the school with more reliable information about the pupils' achievements. Individual targets are set with the result that pupils' understanding of their achievements and what they have to do is developing well, particularly in writing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving rapidly. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and has a clear plan of action in place to bring about improvements. The school is checking its pupils' progress more frequently, particularly in writing, and using this information to plan better lessons and to advise pupils more effectively about how they can improve their work. However some of these good procedures are very new and have not yet had an impact on improving pupils' achievement overall. The school accepts that it needs to use this improving information to set itself more challenging targets for improvement. The school is calm and orderly and the day-to-day management of the school is effective. However managers are not yet rigorous enough in ensuring that procedures and policies are regularly reviewed and fully acted upon. The headteacher is open to new ideas. He supports other staff well in developing their leadership skills. He works effectively with staff, governors and parents to promote pupils' development. Parents are very supportive of the school although a few said that they would like more notice of school events and more information about the topics their children are working on. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall and is now improving more rapidly.

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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?	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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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

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	3
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?	3

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?	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	2
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

- We really enjoyed our visit to your school. We particularly enjoyed visiting your classrooms, seeing the work you were doing, and talking to you about your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful. We found that your school provides you with a sound education.
Good things about your school
- You make at least satisfactory progress in your work and standards are above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- The teachers are giving you more opportunities to talk about your work and this is helping you to make better progress.
- Your attendance is good. You behave well. You get on well with your teachers and usually enjoy your lessons.
- The adults in school look after you well so that you feel safe and happy.
- You have lots of opportunities to take part in sports, visits, theme days, productions and other activities which you enjoy very much.
- Staff and governors are making changes which are bringing about improvements. What we have asked your school to do now
- Make sure that the changes, which are making your school better, are carried out in the same way in every class.
- Use the information they have about your work to set challenging targets so that you make even better progress.
- Some of you could help by making sure that you always come to school on time. This would help you make a good start to the day and would be good training for your future lives in school and in work. We wish you all the best for the future.