

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126037
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	293443
Inspection dates	3–4 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Eira Gill

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	239
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Lucas
Headteacher	K Amaladoss
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2001
School address	Glamis Street Bognor Regis PO21 1DJ
Telephone number	01243 822287
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St. Mary's Catholic Primary is an average sized school. Although most pupils are White British, there is an increasing number of pupils from other countries and ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who are learning English as an additional language is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average, but higher in some year groups. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is higher than the national average. More pupils have joined the school in the last two years than would normally be expected. Children, overall, enter the school with skills and experiences that are generally below those expected for their age. The school serves an area where there are pockets of economic disadvantage. The school offers additional services of community provision for adult and family education.

The school has experienced some turbulence in staffing during the last two years. Several awards have been gained in recognition of its work: The West Sussex Healthy Schools Status and Dyslexia Friendly Award, the Active Mark and the Intermediate International Schools Award. The school has also attained Investors in People status and the Investors in People Work Life Balance Award.

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 school with a very strong Christian ethos. The headteacher has been highly successful in creating a very calm and reflective community where the care of pupils is outstanding and aspects of their personal development are first rate. Her considerable expertise in those areas is used by local organisations and other schools. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they display an exceptional understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle, with total regard for the safety of themselves and others. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Parents are strongly appreciative. One said, 'There is an excellent child-centred focus in which all individuals are valued and individual needs met sensitively'. Links with parents, the church and other providers and organisations are exceptionally strong and contribute significantly to the pupils' good personal development. External links also provide a range of courses for parents through the Family Learning Network.

Standards in Years 2 and 6 are in line with those expected for pupils' ages and have recently improved in mathematics. Higher attaining pupils perform better in reading than those nationally. However, overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching assistants mostly give good support to pupils with learning difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language. These pupils make good progress. In Reception, where teaching is good, children achieve well. In Years 1 to 5, the quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent and a few pupils do not make the progress expected of them. Some lessons are exciting and well taught. However, in others, the pace is uneven and pupils are not given enough challenge to encourage them to think hard and move forward in their learning. The quality of marking is also inconsistent in those year groups and does not always guide children to make improvements as well as it should. Teaching and learning are outstanding in Year 6, where additional part-time teachers are employed to teach pupils in small groups. Pupils catch up in their learning and respond enthusiastically to the teachers' high expectations. They relish the challenge they are given. Marking here is very effective.

The curriculum provides a satisfactory basis for pupils' learning and is enriched by a very wide range of activities both in school and after school that broaden the pupils' experiences significantly. This enrichment is good. Pupils' natural musical and sporting talents are encouraged well. Pupils enjoy themselves hugely in the newly zoned playgrounds, and the Year 5 play managers carry out their very important role effectively by ensuring fair play and safety. The special gardens designed by the Chair of Governors and the children have created a sense of beauty and peace around the school environs. The gardens contribute exceptionally well to the quality of pupils' reflective development and their understanding of how plants and vegetables grow.

Care, support and guidance are good. Excellent systems are in place for the care of the pupils. However, the use of targets to focus pupils on what they need to learn is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure good progress. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although systems for tracking and recording the progress of the pupils are completed annually, they are not used effectively enough to identify gaps in the learning of pupils and to give an accurate assessment of teaching. Governors give good support to the school and are aware of where improvements need to be made.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching is well paced and that expectations of pupils are raised so that learning across the school is as good as it is in the best lessons.
- Improve marking and provide clear targets for pupils that show them the next steps in their learning
- Ensure that tracking procedures are better used to review pupils' progress and to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching so that improvements can be made. 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

Pupils' achievement at the end of Year 6 is satisfactory and standards are average. Pupils with learning difficulties and pupils who are in the early stages of learning English make good progress. Children make good progress in the Reception Year. The rate of progress in Years 1 to 5 is uneven, due in some part to the slow pace in a few lessons and also, at times, to the lack of challenge.

Standards were average in the work of Year 2 pupils in 2006 for reading, writing and mathematics, with more pupils attaining at the higher levels in reading than those nationally but fewer in mathematics. Pupils in the present Year 2 are working at similar levels but are making better progress in mathematics because teaching has improved.

Pupils who left the school in 2006 made satisfactory progress to reach average standards in English, mathematics and science. Targets were not met in writing although the higher attaining pupils performed better than pupils nationally in reading. Boys did not achieve as well as expected. Boys in the current Year 6 are making better progress. Progress improves very rapidly in Year 6 due to outstanding teaching for pupils of all levels of ability. Standards are average and pupils are likely to meet their targets this year. Pupils are developing a satisfactory range of skills to prepare them for the next stages of education and the world of work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. In assembly, pupils' concentration and their strong commitment to reflective and spiritual moments are remarkable. Their emotional maturity is a direct outcome of the excellent opportunities provided by the school. Pupils are attentive in lessons and concentrate well even when too much time is spent on explanations. Attendance is above average and is a natural consequence of pupils' enjoyment of school. All pupils feel very valued, safe and secure. Their understanding of healthy diets and safe lifestyles is excellent. Pupils' response to opportunities to manage the improvement and safety of activities in the playgrounds is exceptionally mature. They take full responsibility and act as peer mediators and 'playtime friends'. Pupils' self-esteem is high because their successes in and outside of school are very valued, such as achievement in sport and dance. Many pupils, particularly members of the school council, make a very positive contribution to the school and town communities. They report to the governing body using computer-assisted presentations and participate in several Deanery and town events, such as 'South East in Bloom'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall, with consistently better teaching and learning in Reception and in Year 6 than elsewhere. The youngest children make a good start. Teaching assistants make a mostly effective contribution to learning throughout the school. In Year 2 improved organisation has ensured that higher attaining pupils in mathematics are taught in a smaller group and they are now making the progress expected of them. Overall, in Years 1 to 5, learning is inconsistent and a few pupils do not make the progress they should. This is because the pace of lessons is sometimes slow and the level of challenge given to pupils is often not high enough. Marking is methodical but does not always indicate what pupils need to do next to improve the quality of their work. Teaching in Year 6, however, is outstanding, with additional highly skilled part-time teachers teaching pupils in small groups, giving a strong challenge. It is evident from pupils' books that progress is consistently good and often outstanding for all groups. This ensures that pupils catch up in their learning. Marking is good and identifies exactly what the pupils need to do next improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A wide range of after-school activities contributes significantly to the pupils' good personal development and outstanding healthy lifestyle. The recent introduction of French is broadening the curriculum and improving speaking and listening skills. Better provision for the teaching of mathematics has improved standards in Years 2 and 6 but, overall, there is satisfactory provision for literacy and numeracy. Sometimes, there is a lack of sufficient challenge for all groups of pupils. The ICT curriculum has been considerably enhanced with the addition of the 'Virtual Learning Environment'. Pupils' contribution to the curriculum is good and the school council reports, 'We all had a say about the new playground'. This excellent initiative has resulted in high quality sporting opportunities. The cleverly planned sensory and Bible gardens designed by pupils and the chair of the governing body contribute to the pupils' exceptional spiritual and emotional development. Links with other providers, church groups and local organisations are outstanding. Strong external partnerships ensure that a school counsellor and art therapist are available on site as well as a family link worker.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care of the pupils is outstanding. The school provides extremely good systems to ensure high levels of care for those who are suffering difficulties or stress. Pupils' emotional well-being is exceptionally well provided for. Leadership is very effective in liaising with parents and outside agencies in order to gain extra support for pupils who need it. Where necessary, excellent support is given to parents to improve their parenting and English skills. Pupils are extremely secure and trust totally in the adults. Their academic development is not as strong, due to inconsistencies in teaching and learning in Years 1 to 5. Strategies are in place to support and guide pupils' academic progress and the school recognises that pupils' personal learning targets are not sufficiently rigorous. Although parents are given written guidance on their children's individual targets, the pupils have difficulty recalling them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory overall. The headteacher's leadership of the care of pupils and aspects of their personal development is outstanding. The role of the subject leaders in driving curriculum development and learning is satisfactory. Although systems for tracking the progress of pupils are in place, the school is aware that these need to be reviewed more frequently to identify where support is needed and where to provide more challenge. Pupils with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language are identified in the early stages by leaders as well as the specialist teacher, and pupils are provided with good support for their learning. Governors give good support to the school and, despite the weaknesses in the evaluation of the school's effectiveness, are generally aware of where improvements need to be made. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

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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?	1
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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	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

6 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bognor Regis, West Sussex, PO21 1DJ

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We really enjoyed talking with you and observing your lessons. You were all very polite and helpful throughout the two days. Your headteacher has created a very peaceful and calm community where you all feel very safe and well looked after. We think that your school is presently satisfactory.

Here are the things that we found to be best about your school:

- your headteacher, senior leaders and the governors take great care of you
- your behaviour is really excellent and you have good attitudes to your work
- you enjoy school and attend very regularly
- you all have an exceptionally good understanding of a healthy lifestyle and how to keep safe
- your ability in assembly to chat with each other sensibly about how you can set a good example for other children is quite remarkable
- those of you who find it a little more difficult to read and write are making good progress with the help of the teaching assistants
- the way you take responsibility, for example the Zonepark leaders at playtimes, is excellent.
- Here are the things that the school could do better:
 - make sure that the work you do in lessons is not too easy; you can help by asking for harder work
 - make sure all the teachers give you targets in a way that helps you to know how well you are doing and how you can do even better; you can help by thinking about how you have improved in lessons and helping set the targets
 - use the information about your progress from class to class more effectively to improve teaching and to make sure you are all learning as well as you should.

With best wishes

Eira Gill Lead Inspector