

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	126494
<b>Local Authority</b>	Swindon
<b>Inspection number</b>	293575
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 March 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Curtis

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	241
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Liam Slattery
<b>Headteacher</b>	Clare-Marie Burchall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2001
<b>School address</b>	Bessemer Road East Swindon SN2 1PE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01793 523850
<b>Fax number</b>	01793 533506

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an average size primary school. It has an increasing number of pupils from minority ethnic families, mainly from Poland, Italy and Goa. Currently, 29 pupils learn English as an additional language, although none is at the very early stage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The headteacher was appointed in June 2006 following a period of instability in the leadership of the school. The newly qualified teacher in the Foundation Stage has been in post since January 2007.

## 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 good features. It is improving as the result of the very effective actions taken by the headteacher, since her appointment, to improve teaching and learning and eliminate underachievement. Her evaluation of the school's performance is accurate and she has rapidly identified key areas for improvement. Importantly, she has the full support of staff, governors and parents in her drive for school improvement. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

Provision and standards are satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. Currently, the quality of resources and the layout of the classroom restrict children's learning. For pupils in Years 1 to 6, achievement is satisfactory because teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is improving and, as a result, achievement in English is now good and standards are above average. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. There remain inconsistencies in planning work to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers do not always make clear the amount of work pupils should do in lessons. In individual lessons, progress is impeded where there is no teaching assistant to provide additional support. A minority of parents expressed concerns over this issue.

Good care, guidance and support make a significant contribution to pupils' good personal development and well-being and to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy school. Behaviour is good and pupils' relationships with each other and adults are very good. Pupils from the many different backgrounds in the school work and play happily together. In Year 6, pupils take pride in the many responsibilities they are given. Pupils are confident that the school council gets things done, such as the imminent replacement of worn out blinds in classrooms. Staff know pupils exceptionally well and provide them with very strong pastoral support. Pupils value the academic guidance they are given, especially through knowing their personal targets for improvement.

Leadership and management are satisfactory with a significant strength being the headteacher's drive and determination, along with the governors, to secure school improvement. Other key staff are more confident in their roles and are now starting to have a positive impact on raising achievement. However, they are not sufficiently involved in monitoring teaching and learning.

Parents and pupils are positive about the school. The school's all embracing welcome to each and every pupil, especially those from minority ethnic families, is a significant strength. As one of these parents wrote, 'I am very happy with St Mary's School because with your help my children are making good progress and growing up with good talent. So I am very grateful to St Mary's School.'

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of resources and classroom accommodation for children in the Foundation Stage.
- When funding allows, increase the number of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning.
- Ensure that all lessons are planned to meet pupils' varying learning needs and make sure pupils know exactly how much work is expected of them.
- Ensure that all subject leaders monitor standards, achievement and teaching and learning in their subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. By the time they start Year 1, children meet the goals they are expected to achieve. Progress in personal, social and emotional development, creative development and physical development is not as good as in other areas of learning. The reason for this is primarily linked to 'tired' resources and classroom accommodation which is not organised well enough to support children's needs.

Achievement in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory but good in English. By Year 6, standards are above average in English and broadly average in mathematics and science. In mathematics and science, too few more able pupils make the progress expected based on their prior achievement in Year 2. However, improved teaching and learning, together with stronger tracking of progress, mean teachers now identify potential underachievement much sooner. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved significantly since the last inspection. They now meet national expectations.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, together with those who have English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress over time. In individual lessons where there is no teaching assistant, progress is impeded through lack of sufficient support.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

In the Foundation Stage, children's personal, social and emotional development is satisfactory because of the limitations of the classroom in developing independent learning. In Years 1 to 6, pupils are friendly and welcoming. They are happy to discuss their work and talk enthusiastically about their school. They expect to enjoy their lessons and nearly always work with concentration and enthusiasm, whether independently, in pairs or small groups. These opportunities for teamwork (for instance, in the school's highly successful football team) prepare them well for life as adults. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to stay safe and to keep themselves fit and healthy. They move sensibly around the school and cooperate well with each other in the playground. Older pupils are caring and thoughtful towards younger ones. All pupils recognise the importance of raising funds for charities. They were delighted to hear how well the Christmas boxes they prepared for children in Eastern Europe were received and are looking forward to further contacts. They distribute produce from Harvest Festival to local good causes and provide entertainment and presents for elderly residents.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Relationships with children are good. The exciting outdoor play area is used effectively to support learning. However, the classroom for children, together with 'tired' resources, are not organised in a way in which children can make the best possible progress. Most noticeably, there is no book corner to promote a love of reading.

In Years 1 to 6, there is an increasing proportion of good teaching. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. Relationships are good. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. Teachers make

lesson introductions interesting and exciting through good explanations and demonstrations, including effective use of interactive whiteboards. The way in which pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, together with those who have English as an additional language, are fully included in lessons is good. Pupils in Year 6 feel that lessons are challenging. They value the quality of support from teachers, including marking, which tells them how they can improve their work.

A number of parents expressed concern over the lack of teaching assistants to support their children's learning. Inspection findings support this because there are lessons where teachers have no additional support and this holds back pupils' progress at these times.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Although provision for outdoor play is very good, the classroom is not organised well enough to ensure that children make good progress in all areas of learning. Planning is not tightly linked to the 'stepping stones' for each area of learning.

In Years 1 to 6, teachers increasingly make good links between subjects to consolidate learning and enrich pupils' learning. For example, pupils in a Year 2 and 3 class make Egyptian pyramids and decorative collars using mathematical patterns. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are taught French. Their interest in the language is further encouraged by St Mary's good links with a school in France. The curriculum is enriched by a growing number of offsite visits, as well as visitors of many different sorts. All pupils in Year 6 have the opportunity to go on a residential trip; last year, they visited the Isle of Wight. A variety of clubs is available at lunchtimes and after school. The school has made great efforts to ensure that the growing numbers of pupils for whom English is not their first language are able to access the curriculum. This is also true for those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Good procedures are in place to ensure the safety of all working within the school community. All legal safeguarding requirements are met. Pupils know that the adults in the school are trustworthy and will always try to help them with any difficulties. They are confident that any bullying is quickly dealt with. Subject leaders are working hard to ensure that new and improved systems for assessing pupils' academic progress are put in place consistently in those subjects where assessment is not as good as it could be. Good support strategies are in place to help individuals who have learning difficulties and disabilities or who learn English as an additional language. The school makes good use of outside agencies to provide additional support, such as speech therapy, when necessary. A variety of systems for reward and celebration encourage all pupils to give of their best. Relationships are good and often better. Staff really try their best to ensure that their pupils feel happy and secure at school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Immediately, on her appointment, the headteacher carried out a rigorous audit of the school. Following this, she produced an 18-point action plan aimed primarily at improving the quality

of teaching and eliminating underachievement. She has successfully taken all staff and governors on board with her vision for the school. The impact of the headteacher's hard work is evident in much improved teaching and learning. No teaching is inadequate and an increasing proportion is good, with examples of outstanding lessons. Monitoring of teaching and learning is frequent and often carried out jointly by the headteacher with the local authority advisor. Not all subject leaders are involved in this process. Currently, there is not a sharp enough focus in lesson observations on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. While leadership, taken overall, is currently satisfactory, the school is well placed to improve quickly as the headteacher's hard work begins to bear fruit.

Subject leaders now play an increasing role in monitoring their subjects. Action plans have been written which are linked closely to the raising of achievement in Years 3 to 6 in particular. The monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress means that underachievement is now being identified much sooner than was previously the case. Consequently, the school is better placed to provide effective support programmes for pupils in danger of falling behind. Monitoring of progress by gender, ability and ethnicity is still not fully embedded across the school.

Governors are very supportive of the school. They have a good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement.





## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for the warm welcome we received when we came to your school. We do need to say a special thank you to the school council and the Year 6 'team' who gave up part of their lunch break to talk with us. At the moment, we think your school is satisfactory with some good features. Most importantly, it is getting better all the time. These are the things that we thought were good:

- By the time you leave school, your work in English is good.
- You are polite and friendly and make visitors feel welcome; your behaviour is good.
- You enjoy most of your lessons and like to know how well you are doing in your work.
- You feel very safe in school and know there are people you can talk to if you are worried.
- All those who lead and manage your school are right behind your new headteacher in making the school even better.

We have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to do the following as part of the process of improving your school:

- Those of you in the Foundation Stage class need to have some new equipment and more exciting spaces in your classroom.
- To find ways of giving you more teaching assistants to help you learn.
- To make sure that in all lessons work is not too easy or too hard and that you know how much work you are expected to do.
- To help teachers who lead subjects to have more time to check up on how well you are being taught and the progress you are making in every subject.