



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131410
Local Authority South Gloucestershire
Inspection number 293746
Inspection dates 5–6 March 2007
Reporting inspector Geoff Burgess

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Webbs Wood Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Bradley Stoke
Age range of pupils	4–11		Bristol BS32 8EJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01454 866390
Number on roll (school)	205	Fax number	01454 866391
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ian Plasto
		Headteacher	C Collett
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized school which opened in 1999 in a relatively new suburb of Bristol. Most of its pupils have a Catholic background but a growing number of parents of other beliefs, including Hindu and Muslim, have chosen to send their children to the school. Over three-quarters of the school's pupils are White British. The rest come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with a few for whom English is not their first language. Few pupils are entitled to free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which has become a model of good practice in the seven years since it opened. Pupils and parents are delighted with the school and it is held in high esteem in the local area. One very pleased parent illustrates her daughter's enjoyment by commenting that she is 'intensely proud of the school, its achievements and her own achievements to date'. Although every aspect of its work is outstanding, it sets such high standards that the whole-school community is committed to continuing to develop and improve. The school's excellent track record in this area, its very perceptive self-evaluation and its ambitious agenda all show that it has the capacity to do so.

Achievement is outstanding in all subjects from the Reception class to Year 6. Almost all children start school with above-average attainment. As a result, standards are now exceptionally high throughout the school, having improved each year to be exceptionally high in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science in 2005, and even better in 2006. In Year 2, high standards have been maintained in reading, writing and mathematics over the past six years. In all year groups, almost all pupils are currently working at least at expected levels, and a good majority are working at even higher levels.

Children get an excellent start to their schooling in the Reception class. A parent, 'thrilled' that her daughter was given a place at the school, was 'amazed how much she had already learned in the short time she had been there'. Outstanding teaching throughout the school, an outstanding curriculum and a very high quality programme of assessment for learning ensure that this is built on each year. Expectations are very high for both pupils and staff. As a result, the school consistently fulfils its vision of 'excellence from all and for all'. Care, support and guidance are outstanding.

Very high expectations extend to pupils' personal development and well-being, which are outstanding. With staff acting as excellent role models, the school's Christian values are routinely demonstrated by pupils in their day-to-day activities. Behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary. Rich and varied activities and a safe, calm environment ensure that pupils thoroughly enjoy their time in school. Pupils know how to stay safe, fit and healthy and are very pleased to play their part in the school community. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is excellent.

Leadership and management are outstanding, with the head providing the vision, determination and energy to motivate the whole-school community to reach for ever more challenging targets. However, the school recognises that more could be done to further develop the contribution made by other staff in this area. Excellent monitoring procedures ensure that the highest standards are maintained and that the best use is made of the school's resources.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make it possible for all staff to fully develop their leadership and management skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are exceptionally high, having improved year on year from above average in English, mathematics and science when the school opened. Every Year 6 pupil achieved at least Level 4 in all subjects in 2005 and 2006. Half reached Level 5 in all subjects in 2005. More than two-thirds did the same in 2006. Targets set for Year 6 in 2007 are equally high and pupils are on track to achieve them. The school's records and pupils' work show that equally high standards are being maintained in the rest of the school. Standards in Year 2 were also exceptionally high in 2006, having been at least well above average for the previous five years.

Achievement is outstanding. Children in the Reception class get a wonderful start. Almost all achieve the early learning goals well before the end of their first year in school and pupils go on to make excellent progress throughout the school. As a result, a significant number of pupils operate at the highest levels available in national testing throughout their time in school. This limits the ability of the school to demonstrate statistically the excellent value it adds to pupils' learning. Pupils with learning difficulties are promptly identified and supported. Their very good progress makes a big contribution to the overall high standards achieved.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school's strong faith-based ethos fosters an environment in which all pupils feel valued and respected. As one Year 6 pupil expressed it, 'There is a lot of respect around here.' High quality spiritual development is a particular feature of the school. Regular reflection times encourage pupils to think beyond themselves and understand human feelings and emotions. Their social and cultural understanding extends to issues such as fair trade and recycling because the school promotes them in very practical ways. Remarkably high attendance levels reflect pupils' enjoyment of their education. Pupils develop into mature individuals who relish taking on responsibility such as being play leaders. Pupils of all ages influence the running of the school through the school council, where they have taken action on issues including healthy eating and playground equipment. They say they feel safe and are well informed about such things as the dangers posed by strangers and misuse of drugs. When pupils leave the school they have a very strong sense of themselves as individual learners with responsibility for themselves and the community they live in. They are very well prepared for future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The impact of very high quality teaching can be seen in every class. Confident, highly motivated and enthusiastic teachers and learners routinely achieve very high standards.

As a result, teachers and learners thoroughly enjoy their time in school and make the most of all the opportunities presented to them. A pupil comments, 'My teacher makes learning fun'. Lessons are meticulously planned with the learning needs of all pupils in mind. Very good use is made of a wide range of resources to stimulate and focus the learning process. Expectations for the pace of working, behaviour and the quality of finished work are very high. Very good arrangements for marking pupils' work and monitoring their learning needs mean that pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve. Highly skilled teaching assistants make an excellent contribution, especially by supporting pupils who need extra support to keep up with their classmates.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides a stimulating curriculum which motivates pupils to want to learn. It has been carefully adapted to the needs of learners by linking subjects together. A rich learning environment both indoors and outdoors with very attractive displays enhances the quality of the activities on offer. The school makes creative use of 'themed weeks' to explore some subjects, such as different faiths, in more depth. It makes excellent use of specialist teachers in French, sports skills and music to extend the range of opportunities on offer to pupils. Close attention is given to the basic skills in literacy and numeracy and every opportunity is taken to develop these in other subjects. Activities are routinely and creatively modified to meet the varied needs of those with learning difficulties and those who are especially gifted and talented.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is a school which clearly cherishes its pupils. Pupils and parents speak extremely highly of the caring atmosphere within the school. This is a significant factor in pupils' enjoyment of school, their sense of well-being and the excellent progress they make. The school encourages all the different groups of pupils to succeed and draws out talents across a wide range of subjects. Teachers know their pupils' needs very well and track their progress extremely carefully. The systems used contribute strongly to them attaining high standards. Rigorous procedures for protecting and safeguarding children are in place and arrangements for health and safety are well established.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with a parent who writes that this is 'a truly excellent school with fair and strong leadership... It is continually progressing and developing, never complacent and always puts the children's needs first'. The effectiveness of the school's leadership and management can be shown by the fact that since the last inspection, six years of continuous improvement in provision has seen standards rise to be exceptionally high. Its efficiency, and its strategic ambition, can be seen in the fact that this has been achieved on a tight budget while the school saved to fund a major improvement to its

accommodation. The role of the governing body in making all this possible has been very important.

Underpinning this has been the school's drive for excellence. Extremely rigorous appointment procedures ensure that all staff appointed have the potential to become excellent in their teaching and management roles. Very high expectations, clearly expressed, and high quality support and guidance help staff to achieve their teaching potential. The school is now in a good position to extend this into developing the leadership and management skills of all staff, an area which the school is aware is less well developed. Constant monitoring, both formal and informal, ensures that problems are avoided and the needs of individuals are met promptly.

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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	1
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	1
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	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?	1
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

Mrs Meese and I would like to thank you all for making our two days at your school enjoyable. We really enjoyed all the conversations we had and especially enjoyed sharing the quiet reflection times in your classrooms. Like you, we think that St Mary's is a fantastic school.

These are the good things we found:

- You behave excellently, love learning, work hard and do your best.
- You learn a lot and are very good at lots of subjects.
- We agree with you that your teachers and helpers are good at helping you learn.
- The things you do in class really make you think – but are interesting and fun.
- You and all the grown-ups make everyone welcome at the school and include them in all there is going on.
- You know you are safe and that there is always someone to turn to.
- We know you appreciate all the grown-ups do to make sure your time in school is as happy as possible.
- Your headteacher is brilliant at making it possible for everyone to do their best.

To make things even better, this is what we have asked your school to do now:

- Give teachers and other staff opportunities to develop the things they are responsible for.

Again, thank you for all you do to make your school as good as it is. It was a privilege for us to share it with you for a short time.