



St Mary of Charity CE (Aided) Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 133663
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 295461
Inspection dates 8–9 March 2007
Reporting inspector Helen Hutchings

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Orchard Place
School category	Voluntary aided		Faversham
Age range of pupils	4–11		ME13 8AP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01795 532496
Number on roll (school)	261	Fax number	01795 591052
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Tony Oehring
		Headteacher	Rachel Palmer
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2006		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–11	8–9 March 2007	295461

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves a mixed area, including a region of significant social deprivation, leading to a local authority decision to place a Children's Centre on the school site in the near future. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is just above the national average but the proportion who have identified special educational needs, including a statement of special educational need, is well above that found nationally. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds but an increasing number speak English as an additional language. When the school was last inspected, it was judged to require significant improvement and was given a Notice to Improve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Mary of Charity is an improving school, increasingly meeting its aim 'to create an exciting learning environment, where all members of its community are valued and shown respect'. The school has improved sufficiently since its last inspection so that its overall effectiveness is now satisfactory. Therefore, in accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. It has the confidence and support of parents and carers and many commented on recent improvements.

Pupils reach standards which are below national averages but this represents satisfactory achievement from a low starting point. The gap between school and national performance is reduced as pupils move through the school, giving them a firm foundation for their future education and economic well-being. This improvement is a direct result of consistently sound teaching and a satisfactory curriculum which meets the wide range of pupils' needs effectively. Pupils appreciate teachers' efforts to make learning interesting but some of their tasks are not challenging enough, particularly for higher attaining pupils, and marking does not always show pupils precisely what they have to do to improve. Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used sufficiently widely to strengthen learning in other subjects. Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory and improving so that pupils are positive about school and most show this in their good behaviour. This reflects the good care, guidance and support they are given. The school council is beginning to make a useful contribution to school life. The good personal care and support helps pupils, and more vulnerable pupils in particular, to develop their confidence. Pupils' academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils' progress is monitored regularly to target additional support if it is necessary. Attendance is improving gradually but remains below the national average.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's passion to raise standards is infectious and has led to very effective teamwork and enthusiasm across the staff team. Staff are very determined to improve standards further and know what they have to do to achieve this. The Foundation Stage is now satisfactory with higher standards. The significant improvements since the last inspection show the school's good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching and learning by providing more challenging tasks, particularly for higher attaining pupils, and ensuring that marking identifies exactly what pupils have to do to improve.
- Broaden the use of information and communication technology to help pupils' learning in other subjects.
- Work further with parents and pupils to improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards have improved further since the last inspection, although there is still room for more improvement. Many pupils now make good progress but some, including those with poor attendance rates, are not yet making the expected rates of progress. Children join the school with low skills levels for their age. The school has improved the Foundation Stage so that children now progress satisfactorily, although they still have significant weaknesses across all the areas of learning, particularly in their speech and language development. In other year groups very few pupils joined Year 1 having reached the expected goals so have had much to catch up. Standards in the tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 are still below, but moving closer to, the national averages. The school's focus on improving literacy and science has been effective. There is now the same attention being brought to mathematics, which is showing some signs of success. The school is confidently setting more challenging targets and is on course to achieve them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are friendly and helpful. Most enjoy their learning and show this in good presentation of their work. Pupils work well together on shared tasks, usually cooperating constructively in their groups and sharing ideas. They are safe and well looked after. They say that any bullying is dealt with and that there is someone who will listen to them. Pupils feel that their opinions are valued and are proud of the difference they make within the school, when they take on responsibility, and to the community, through fundraising for charities such as Christian Aid and Red Nose Day. These activities are successfully giving pupils an understanding of wider social and economic issues, other cultures and a clear appreciation of those less fortunate than themselves. The clear procedures for rewarding good behaviour are valued by pupils so that they behave well, shown in the significant decline in the need to use sanctions such as exclusion. Pupils understand the need to eat healthily, take regular exercise and enjoy sporting activities. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Spiritual development is supported well, reflecting the school's Christian ethos. Good partnership work with the education welfare officer to challenge absence with parents and pupils has led to reduced levels. However, attendance remains slightly below average, mainly because of the poor attendance of a group of families.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The sound teaching and learning across the school have a positive impact on pupils' achievements and many good lessons were observed during the inspection. At the

start of lessons, teachers make sure that pupils understand what they will be learning. This helps pupils to focus on their own achievements at the end of the session. Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils well and use this to manage behaviour effectively and create a good climate for learning. Well planned and organised lessons give attention to the different ways in which individuals learn and generally lessons are paced well. In some lessons, whilst other elements are good, children's progress slows because the level of challenge in their tasks is not high enough or teachers talk for too long at the beginning. Because pupils are not actively engaged in learning some become restless whilst others lose interest. Marking is regular and supportive but does not always pinpoint sufficiently closely for pupils their next steps of learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced to meet the needs of learners, including those with a wide range of learning and emotional difficulties. An emphasis on English, mathematics and science is effectively leading to higher standards. Good quality planning ensures that links are made to the use of basic skills in other subjects. The personal, social and health programme is effective in enabling pupils to understand the need to stay safe and live healthily as well as developing their social and problem-solving skills. The school has correctly identified the need to make more use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum.

Pupils benefit from a growing range of additional opportunities to enrich their learning. They participate in a range of sporting activities, such as netball and basketball, and appreciate the skills and qualities brought by visitors such as the 'Life Bus' and Fleurs de Leys Centre. They benefit from an expanding variety of educational visits, including a valuable residential experience for Year 6 pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has particular strengths in the care for pupils' well-being. Risk assessments and the health and safety of pupils receive very good attention. Very good arrangements for pupils with emotional and specific learning difficulties help them to feel secure and to develop self confidence. The very good links with the speech therapist and specific training for staff in this aspect support pupils who have speech difficulties particularly well. Good partnerships with external professional agencies, especially the support for pupils with behavioural difficulties, enable staff to manage these pupils well. Child protection arrangements are good and staff know how to identify and report any specific concerns.

Assessment arrangements are satisfactory and developing further. Pupils' overall progress is tracked well and staff use the available data effectively to intervene if pupils are not meeting their agreed targets. The school is well advanced in its plans to improve record keeping further to plot each pupil's progress against key skills in areas such as mathematics, knowledge of phonics and ICT.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been very successful in creating an exceptionally strong sense of teamwork at all levels, so that there is a shared determination to succeed. There is a real zeal to create a strong learning environment where pupils are excited about their achievements. The analysis of strengths and weaknesses is realistic and used well to introduce systems and initiatives which will have the greatest impact. Staff have worked closely and successfully with the local authority to bring best practice into the school in, for example, bringing about improvements in the Reception class and attendance. Consistent approaches to teaching have increased pupils' rates of progress over the last two years. The headteacher's enthusiasm to raise standards is seen in the ambitious planning that is well matched to the school's priorities. The governing body recognises and gives support to the headteacher's relentless drive for improvement and together they have brought about stability in staffing and financial viability during a period of falling rolls in the area.

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	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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	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?	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	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

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome to your school and talking to us about the things you do. We are pleased that everything is at least satisfactory.

- You behave well and this helps you to work hard, although some of you said that you could work even harder.
- The adults in the school do a good job.
- The adults help you to make progress and reach standards which are getting closer to those of other pupils of your age.
- The youngest children get off to a sound start in the Reception class.
- You are cared for well and know that you have someone to go to if you have a problem.
- We were pleased that bullying is dealt with well when you tell an adult.
- Many of you enjoy the sports clubs and this helps you to keep fit and healthy.

There are a few things that the school still needs to do and we hope that you will concentrate on these too. We have asked your teachers to:

- sometimes give you more challenging work, particularly for the more able pupils
- point out exactly how you can make your work better so that you can concentrate on this in your next piece
- use computers more to help you learn in other subjects.

You can help your learning too by making sure that you always come to school unless you are ill. Very best wishes for the future.