



St Mary's CofE Primary School, East Barnet

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101324
Local Authority Barnet
Inspection number 296527
Inspection dates 5–6 December 2006
Reporting inspector Martin Beale

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Littlegrove
School category	Voluntary aided		East Barnet
Age range of pupils	4–11		Barnet EN4 8SR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8449 5856
Number on roll (school)	210	Fax number	020 8440 6517
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Eddie Thompson
		Headteacher	Mrs Mel Adams
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2003		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's is an average sized school. In this mobile population a high proportion of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, although few are at an early stage of learning English. Free school meal entitlement is average. Attainment on entry fluctuates considerably but is broadly average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection endorses the school's view that its effectiveness is good. This truly is an inclusive school with some outstanding features. The pupils thrive and develop into mature young people in the happy and purposeful atmosphere, where they take responsibility for their learning and for helping to shape the school's future. They have a real sense of belonging and pride in their school. Their personal development is outstanding. The strong Christian ethos is reflected in all that the school does and in the values to which the pupils aspire. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. It is successfully promoted, through well-planned assemblies and the key target for each month, such as 'Friendship'. As one parent wrote, 'The children are learning to respect each other and their differences'. This is reflected in the harmonious relationships that prevail at St Mary's, and in the pupils' excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes towards their learning.

Parents are very much in support of the school and are very pleased with the outstanding levels of care, support and guidance their children receive. Parents also acknowledge the high levels of commitment of staff to their children. Teachers have a very clear understanding of the pastoral and developmental needs of the pupils and respond positively to them. This is reflected in the way programmes of support are carefully established to meet the identified needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and strong links with outside agencies used to give further advice and guidance.

The youngest children make a good start in Reception. The staff team works well together to meet the needs of the children through a rich curriculum. The children make good progress and most of the recent group reached nationally expected goals by the time they entered Year 1. This good start is built on well in the rest of the school. Achievement is good and standards are above average by Year 6, but mathematics test results, although average have lagged behind English and science. The school is seeking to remedy this, but the impact of action taken has yet to be seen in sustained improvements. Teaching and learning are good, with some outstanding features in several lessons. The wide range of interesting learning opportunities in lessons provided by the good curriculum is extended by many enrichment activities. As one Year 6 pupil said, 'Music is one of the most important things in our school'.

The key to the school's success and its improvement since the last inspection is its good leadership and management. The clearly expressed and shared vision for the school is put into practice every day. The qualities of the headteacher's leadership are complemented by a strong staff team and supported by an effective governing body. Self-evaluation is thorough and accurate so that the school is clear about its strengths and committed to improving further. Resources are deployed carefully to secure good value for money. Recent changes in the management structure are bedding in, although not all staff are as effective as they might be in leading their subjects forward. In spite of this, the school is well-placed to improve further and deal with the challenges it faces, including the high levels of pupil mobility.

What the school should do to improve further

- Take action to bring test results in mathematics up to the levels achieved in English and science.
- Develop the subject leadership roles of staff further so that they can play a greater role in supporting the school's improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school prepares its pupils well for the next stages of their learning. Pupils make good progress and most meet and often exceed the challenging targets set by their teachers. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities also make good progress as do the very few at an early stage of learning English language. Standards fluctuate quite considerably from year to year because of significant variations in the profile of each cohort. This can include high mobility in some year groups or large numbers of pupils with particular learning needs in others. These factors account for the fall in Year 2 test results in the last three years to below average, although current standards in Years 1 and 2 are much higher. Year 6 test results have been above average, but also fell to average in 2006 for similar reasons. Current standards have returned to the previous levels. Pupils achieve particularly well in reading and are prepared well for science in secondary school because they develop good enquiry skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy school very much, attend regularly and participate with great enthusiasm in activities both in and out of lessons. They settle very quickly into school life whether at the start of Reception or when new to the school. Pupils are very aware of how to stay healthy, especially through eating well and being physically active. They behave in a safe and sensible manner, treating each other with great care and their teachers with much respect. Pupils take advantage of the very many opportunities to help others, both in and out of school. They contribute considerably to the wider community such as by raising funds for charity through their own initiative. They have a strong voice in the school and can point with pride to areas where they have made a difference, such as the adventure trail.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Placing pupils' learning at the heart of lessons is leading to good progress, particularly in English and science, but only satisfactory progress in mathematics. Teachers generally make it clear to pupils what is expected of them in each lesson, but this is not consistent

across the school. Lessons are planned carefully to meet the identified needs of all pupils. Teachers are skilled at identifying suitable strategies to support pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Support staff are very effective, whether helping specific pupils in class or when leading withdrawal sessions. Teachers question skilfully and encourage pupils to consider their responses carefully. Pupils feel valued because teachers encourage their contributions. They share ideas with their talking partners, and constructively assess each other's work saying what has gone well and suggesting how it could be made better. Interactive whiteboards and other new technology are used well to make learning fun for the pupils and to stimulate their imaginations.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad and balanced curriculum is planned carefully and enriched to meet both the academic and personal needs of all pupils. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which are much appreciated by pupils and parents. The topic-based curriculum maintains a strong creative focus which leads to much enjoyment for the pupils. The school caters well for pupils with particular needs, including bilingual pupils and those who have learning difficulties and disabilities. Programmes to extend pupils identified as having particular talents are at an early stage of review and their impact has yet to be established. The curriculum is continually being reviewed, adapted and developed with current action being taken to improve further the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Safeguarding the welfare and well-being of the pupils is central to the work of the school. Health and safety procedures and arrangements for safeguarding children are rigorously applied. Pupils are well known and feel safe and secure in the knowledge that there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem. As one parent stated, 'Every child is known and equally valued'. Arrangements to smooth the arrival of pupils who are new to the school ensure that they become part of the community very quickly. The systematic use of assessment information ensures that pupils' progress is tracked, with extra help given whenever necessary. Class and group targets as well as constructive marking ensure that pupils are clear about what is needed to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong leadership which is reflected in the good standards and outstanding personal development and well-being of the pupils. Governors make a significant contribution to the development of the school. They play an active role in supporting its improvement and challenging it to do even better. Self-evaluation is accurate, honest and used as a secure platform from which to develop the school further. A close check is kept on the work of all staff. Areas for improvement in their

performance are identified and dealt with robustly. For example, work to improve standards in writing and the use of ICT across the curriculum is currently underway. Subject leaders share responsibility for monitoring the work in the areas they lead. However, there is scope to develop their leadership roles further to increase their impact on pupil achievement. This is an aspect that the school has identified as a key priority for the future.

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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?	2
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	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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	1
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	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

I am writing to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. You were all very kind, helpful and showed how proud you are of your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers and watching you learn. There are many aspects of your school that we liked. You and your parents are right in thinking that you go to a good school.

You are taught well and make good progress during your time at the school. Most of you achieve and many of you exceed the standards expected by the time you move on to secondary school. You enjoy school, work very hard and behave sensibly. You develop a sharp sense of what is right and what is wrong and have a mature outlook on many aspects of life. The care and support you receive is outstanding, particularly when you find learning difficult. You take your responsibilities seriously and make a considerable contribution to the life of the school and the community.

Your teachers and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. We have asked those teachers who lead subjects to be more involved in making improvements. You do well in English and science but we feel you could do better in mathematics. We are sure you and your teachers will work hard to make these happen.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead Inspector