

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100172
Local Authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	307316
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Krafft HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	468
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs F Gosbee
Headteacher	Mr J B Holdsworth
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Glenure Road Eltham London SE9 1UF
Telephone number	020 8850 7835
Fax number	020 8294 2688

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's Catholic Primary is a large school with a Nursery. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with just under a quarter coming from other ethnic groups. There are a growing number of families joining the school from Eastern Europe. Few pupils speak a language other than English as their first language. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. Although the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is smaller than found nationally, the proportion with statements of special educational needs is higher than average. Speech, language and communication needs are the most prevalent.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

'Our school provides an environment that not only reflects our faith but one that provides a caring, nurturing atmosphere.' 'St Mary's is a community which my family and I are proud to be members of.' These words echo the sentiment expressed by the large number of parents who sent their views to inspectors. Most are positive about the school's work, although a few feel that their views are not sought or taken into account. Pupils say they feel extremely safe and well cared for, and relish coming to school. A high priority is given to ensuring their welfare and safety. Good partnerships, for example with speech and language therapists and the local parish, make a meaningful contribution to pupils' good personal development and well-being. Within this caring and respectful environment, pupils are provided with a satisfactory education, so make appropriate academic progress in their learning.

From the good start they are given when they join the school, pupils make satisfactory progress overall, to reach standards that are above average, and consistently so in English, by the time they leave Year 6. A tracking system is in place which is used to identify pupils who are below the levels expected for their age. These pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are given extra help to catch up. As a result, more attain the levels expected in English, mathematics and science than nationally. However, there is insufficient analysis of the year-on-year progress made by pupils who are already at or above these levels. As a result the progress they make as they move through the school varies, and is satisfactory overall.

The interesting curriculum is enjoyed by pupils. They have good relationships with adults and positive attitudes to learning, and behave extremely well. Pupils are keen to respond to questions and take part in lessons, but the pace of learning slows when they are not given work that is sufficiently challenging for them. The use of learning targets is underdeveloped, so pupils are unclear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Consequently, although there are some good lessons, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall.

The school's strong Catholic ethos is underpinned by a commitment to ensuring that pupils are valued and learn to be caring citizens. The headteacher is supported in this by governors, and has built a cohesive, loyal staff team. Subject leaders are appropriately involved in monitoring their curriculum areas. However, the evaluation of the school's effectiveness by leaders at all levels, including governors, while satisfactory, is not sufficiently developed to ensure robust planning for improvement. Nevertheless, the improved attainment of pupils with learning difficulties, and increased opportunities for pupils to contribute their views since the previous inspection, demonstrates that the school has the capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with the knowledge and skills expected for their age. They settle quickly and make good progress by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, so are well prepared for the next stage of learning. This is because staff are sensitive to their needs, liaise with parents well and provide excellent care. Teaching and learning are good, particularly in the Nursery class. Here, children are interested and engaged in a variety of well-planned activities which develop their independence and ability to cooperate with each other. Outstanding personal development and well-being is evident in their exemplary behaviour, their patience and their perseverance. Children concentrate extremely well and show mature social skills.

Transition to the Reception Year has improved since the last inspection, with an increased emphasis on play activities and outdoor learning. However, practitioners are not always clear about the learning focus of the activities they are supporting, and how it builds on the skills that children have acquired in the Nursery. Focused teaching, for example in helping children to link letters and sounds, is having a positive impact on developing their early reading skills. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader, who teaches in another key stage, keeps a watchful eye on day-to-day practice, and has helped practitioners to develop more age-appropriate learning opportunities for children and improve the outdoor environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils at or above the levels expected for their age achieve well by making more consistent progress as they move through the school.
- Increase the challenge in lessons, and ensure that pupils and their parents know how well they are doing and how to improve.
- Develop the role of leaders at all levels, including governors and subject leaders, in evaluating the impact of their actions and planning for improvement.

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

Although results fell at the end of Year 2 and 6 in 2008, standards in English, mathematics and science are above average, and consistently stronger in English. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress from their good starting points at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make better progress in English than in mathematics and science because their early reading skills are well developed. There are different expectations of the progress that pupils should make in each year group, with more expected in Year 6. As a consequence, although they often make more rapid progress in Year 6, the progress they make as they move through the school is inconsistent. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well organised and pupils' needs are met effectively, so they achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development is good. One parent described how 'pupils are encouraged to be patient and understanding of their peers'. They have a very clear understanding of right and wrong, and take on responsibility readily, for example in collecting paper for recycling. Their cultural development, in particular the understanding of other beliefs and cultures, is not as well developed. As one pupil said, 'I would like to learn about different countries and nationalities and how they live.' Pupils adopt a healthy lifestyle, and understand the importance of eating a balanced meal and taking regular exercise. Pupils are keen to come to school, as reflected in their good attendance. Behaviour is outstanding in classrooms, on the playground and around the school. Pupils are insistent that they feel extremely safe, that bullying is rare, and that, if it does occur, it is quickly addressed by teachers. The recently formed school council provides an opportunity for pupils to offer ideas about how to improve the school, for example by adding benches to the grass area in the playground. Pupils contribute well to their community. They support pupils in a school in Ghana, for example by sending them

their outgrown school uniforms, and support a number of charities. Good standards in literacy and numeracy prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy their lessons, have good relationships and respond well to their teachers. Although there are some good lessons, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and pupils make adequate progress. Where lessons are most effective, for example in Year 6, pupils make good progress. These lessons are well structured, and teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan varied activities which are matched to pupils' different needs. Pupils are motivated and involved by good opportunities for them to share ideas. However, these features are inconsistent throughout the school. In some lessons, tasks lack challenge and the pace of learning slows when pupils are not moved on to the next activity as soon as they are ready. Although there is some good-quality marking, most does not inform pupils well enough about how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of learners well because it is carefully planned to be interesting and relevant, for example by linking subjects together, such as history and geography when studying the Greeks. Literacy, numeracy and science are well structured and there are good opportunities for pupils to develop their creative skills, for example through art and drama. Specialist teaching in music and physical education enhance the curriculum well. There is a computer suite which is timetabled for each class to develop their information and communication technology skills, but the opportunities for pupils to use these skills more regularly in lessons are limited. The curriculum is particularly enriched by a wide range of visits to places of interest and by visitors to the school, including artists, musicians, storytellers and poets. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and clubs which are well attended and enjoyed by pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are very good, and clear records are maintained. Very good attention is given to health and safety, including the making of risk assessments for all school visits. Where pupils may need extra support, the school is quick to liaise with support agencies and specialists such as occupational therapists. Sensitive, effective support is provided for vulnerable pupils, for example through a lunchtime club for those who lack confidence on the playground. Although records of pupils' progress are maintained and pupils' work is marked regularly, the academic guidance they are provided with, while satisfactory, is not sufficiently developed to help them to know how well they are doing and understand their next steps in learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has developed a tracking system to identify pupils at risk of not reaching the levels expected for their age, which is used effectively to target additional support. However there is insufficient analysis of the progress that pupils who are already at these levels are making. As a consequence, they are not consistently achieving as well as they could. Subject leaders take part in regular, appropriate monitoring activities, and have undertaken appropriate training. However the evaluation of the impact they are having on provision and pupil achievement is not sufficiently rigorous, because improvement plans lack clear, quantifiable measures of success. Although governors are supportive of the school, they are unclear about what will help it to improve further, which limits their ability to challenge leaders effectively. Governors have not fully met their statutory duty in relation to the information that they give parents about collective worship and religious education. The school promotes community cohesion appropriately, particularly through its links with the local parish, but is not yet systematic in planning and evaluating this aspect of its work.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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?	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

26 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, London, SE9 1UF

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We especially enjoyed looking at your work, seeing you in lessons and talking with so many of you. You were friendly and confident, and told us what you thought very clearly.

Your headteacher and teachers have made your school an attractive place to learn. You and your parents told us that you like school and that it is a welcoming, caring place. You come to school regularly and you know a lot about how to stay fit and healthy. You behave very well, and are polite and caring towards each other. We were very interested to hear that you have started a school council and that you are now able to suggest what you would like improved. We wish you every success with your ideas on the grass area for the playground.

Your school is a satisfactory one, which means there are lots of things that it does well, but that it also needs to make some things better. We have asked the staff to help you even more, by making sure that your lessons and the work you are given are not too easy, and make you think hard. We want them to let you know exactly what you can do to improve your work, and to check that you are all making as much progress as you can. We have also asked them to keep checking that the things they are doing to improve your school are helping you learn as well as you can.

Thank you again for making us so welcome, and we hope that you carry on working hard and enjoying being at school.

Yours faithfully

Jackie Krafft

Her Majesty's Inspector