

St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100446
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	307391
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Judith Dawson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Katharine O'Brien
Headteacher	Miss Wendy Rudge
Date of previous school inspection	18 April 2005
School address	Fowler Road Islington London N1 2EP
Telephone number	020 7359 1870
Fax number	020 7359 3812

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves a community where about half the pupils are from ethnic minority groups. Very few pupils are in the early stages of learning English. The number of pupils identified as having specific learning, medical or social challenges is slightly above average. Attainment on entry to the Reception class varies but is generally well below average. St Mary's has a strong Christian ethos but welcomes pupils from other or no faiths. It was awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Healthy School's status in 2007 and gained School Travel Plan status in the same year. There has been a significant number staff changes over the last two years.

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's is a well-organised school that provides a satisfactory education. It has the care and welfare of the pupils at its heart. There is a strong sense of community and staff work hard to provide a rich and interesting curriculum. This, and the strong Christian ethos and consistent moral and social expectations, result in pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities the school offers, especially practical subjects and the wide range of visits that enhance their learning. They generally behave well and like to please their teachers. Their work in their English and mathematics books is as good as it could be and rarely respond to their teachers' helpful marking.

Children start school with generally low levels of knowledge and skills although the small numbers in each year group result in variations from year to year. Standards remain exceptionally low by the end of Year 6 although there are indications that standards in science are higher this year. In 2007, pupils did not make the expected progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. There has been some improvement in achievement this year and most pupils' achievements are now satisfactory.

Although teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, teaching in lessons is often good and pupils' respond well to the teachers' effective questioning. Lessons are well planned to cater for the diverse needs of pupils. The few incidences of unacceptable behaviour or lack of concentration are dealt with effectively. Teachers' marking gives pupils good advice about how to improve their work. However, teachers do not expect enough of their pupils' written work or ensure that work is corrected and improved. The school has good systems for tracking pupils' progress throughout the school. This enables staff to identify pupils who need additional challenge or support and provide extra help, including to those with social or emotional difficulties. This has been effective in improving their progress. Pupils have English and mathematics targets and some older pupils know exactly what they need to do to attain the next steps in their learning.

Leaders have a very clear understanding of the pupils' needs and plans for development are relevant and manageable. Both the headteacher and the assistant headteacher provide good leadership. Several of the teachers are new to the profession so have few additional responsibilities but the headteacher and assistant headteacher efficiently and cheerfully carry out the extra work that this brings. Teaching and learning are monitored well and initiatives evaluated by leaders, staff and governors. Leaders have a good understanding of the challenges many pupils face at home and of the difficulties many parents and carers have in supporting their children with their work, especially as children get older. The school has worked very hard to deepen the partnership with parents and carers but has found it difficult to engage many parents more directly in their children's education.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception Class with low levels of attainment, particularly in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress, but standards remain low by Year 1, especially in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Staff work together very well and the teacher's planning clearly identifies specific tasks for each adult. As a result,

children are well supported and they achieve well. Interesting activities make learning in all aspects of the curriculum relevant and fun. For example, during the inspection, the imaginary role play area was a 'Garden Centre' and children were planting seeds, making sunflowers and counting peas in a pod. Activities are prepared extremely thoroughly, but this sometimes limits opportunities for children to select their own tools or materials when completing them. The children are well cared for and feel safe and happy in school, developing secure social skills and learning to work and play together amicably. Relationships between children and adults are good. As a result, they enjoy learning. One child said, 'I'm so excited,' when learning letter names and sounds. Adults assess each child's progress and ensure activities are planned to meet individual needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' achievement in English and mathematics throughout the school.
- Ensure pupils and teachers expect good quality written English and mathematics work and provide time for pupils to respond to their teachers' marking.
- Endeavour to engage more parents in their children's learning.

A small proportion of 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

Standards by the end of Year 2 have been improving and, in 2007, were close to average in mathematics. Reading and writing standards remain below average and overall standards remain below average this year. As pupils encounter more challenging work in Key Stage 2, their progress slows and very few attain the higher levels in English and mathematics. By Year 6, standards in English and mathematics remain exceptionally low, although more pupils are working at the expected levels in mathematics. The school has focused on supporting pupils who need additional help or challenge and this is being successful in raising achievement, which is now satisfactory overall. Revised provision for science has been effective and teachers' assessments indicate that standards are higher than last year. Pupils achieve well in information and communication technology (ICT) and practical subjects. However, some are not as enthusiastic when learning English and mathematics and lack support at home.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils know they are valued as individuals and their achievements are celebrated. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. Behaviour is generally good and there are very few incidences of racism or bullying. Pupils really enjoy their practical lessons and the many extra activities on offer. They respond very well to the support given by Church leaders, several taking the opportunities to discuss their personal concerns with them.

Pupils know how to stay safe and have a good knowledge of healthy lifestyles. Pupils in Year 6 have participated in a range of mini-enterprise activities to support the cost of a residential trip to Cardfields in Essex, helping them to prepare for the next stage of their learning. They make a good contribution to the community in school and beyond, taking their responsibilities as house captains or other roles seriously and raising money for The World Cancer Fund.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although several teachers are new to the profession, all have good relationships with pupils and plan lessons that cater for the needs of the different abilities in their classes. Teachers make it clear to pupils what they want them to learn in each lesson. They are careful to preserve pupils' self esteem, encouraging and testing understanding well. All teachers use the school's tracking systems to identify any gaps in pupils' learning and to adapt their planning to address this. Teaching assistants give valuable support and staff work well together. Teachers' marking is generally good, with comments about how well pupils have completed their task as well as points to help them improve. However, pupils rarely respond to their teachers' comments and the same mistakes are repeated, unchallenged by the teachers. Learning is often good in lessons but just satisfactory overall because, in spite of their targets, pupils do not put enough effort into improving their written work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is a broad and relevant curriculum with a good emphasis on pupils' personal development and wellbeing. The many visits outside school broaden pupils' experiences and enhance their social and cultural development. Year 5, for example, visited the Guardian Newspaper offices and wrote good quality news reports. Planning for English and mathematics is satisfactory, and there is a clear focus on using pupils' ICT skills across the curriculum. 'Theme' days and weeks enable pupils to study a topic in depth. Pupils report that they enjoyed 'Science Week' and the design and technology day. The school is continually adapting the curriculum to meet the wide range of needs within the school. Individual and group support programmes for pupils with specific learning or social difficulties or who need more challenge are raising pupils' confidence and improving their learning. A wide range of clubs, from Detective Club to Brazilian Football, help pupils develop a good range of skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is welcoming and has a harmonious atmosphere. Pupils express confidence in knowing that they have an adult to talk to, should they have any concerns. Staff emphasise positive attitudes and the emphasis is on celebration rather than sanction. An assembly on the theme of 'thinking positive from the inside' was a good example of this. Strong links with the local churches make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Older pupils take good care of younger pupils during play and lunch times. Child protection and health and safety procedures are in place and there are good links with external agencies who provide support for pupils. Rigorous systems to improve attendance have been successful. The school knows its pupils' needs well and the newly appointed Inclusion Manager is rigorously following through support for pupils with specific learning or social difficulties and is providing good support for higher attaining pupils. Pupils are aware of their individual targets in English and mathematics. Marking generally provides clear steps for improvement. However, pupils' responses are not always evident in follow up activities. Tracking systems are used well to plan support programmes and to track progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has been through many changes in the three years since the last inspection. There was a period of stability where staff grew in expertise due to the good guidance and support from the headteacher. Some were promoted to other schools. The governors appointed new staff with care. They did not appoint the new inclusion manager, for example, until they were sure the appointee had the relevant skills. Effective professional development and monitoring of achievement, teaching and learning is beginning to improve pupils' achievement. Support for learning is well organised because of the clear systems for identifying pupils who need additional help or challenge. The school is good at including pupils from all backgrounds and walks of life. Good management has enabled all of them to maintain satisfactory progress during recent changes. The new subject leader for science has generated enthusiasm amongst pupils and staff through practical and lively activities. Governors work in partnership with the headteacher and staff, supporting and challenging well. They are very clear about the need to engage parents in their children's learning, for example, and are planning to employ someone to improve home-school liaison. Leaders and managers are swift to respond to immediate and long term needs. They demonstrate both the skills and commitment to ensure that the potential for further improvement is good. As a parent remarked 'The school is constantly improving.'

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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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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?	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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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

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?	2
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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

19 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary School, London, N1 2EP

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help during our visit to your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views. A special thanks to those of you who left your lessons to talk to Mrs Savva.

We were pleased to see that you take care of each other, behave well and know how to keep yourselves healthy and safe. You told us how much you enjoy school, especially when you learn how to do practical and creative things, use the computers or play sports. You appreciate your many visits outside school and your school makes sure you have plenty of interesting things to learn. You are well cared for in school and we know that you feel safe and able to talk to an adult if you have a worry. We are glad that fewer of you are missing school. Well done.

Children in the Reception Class have a good start to school and have many interesting things to learn. Throughout the school, we know many of you find your English and maths work difficult although most of you now make satisfactory progress. There are some things we want you and your teachers to do to help your learning. While most of you concentrate well in your lessons, we noticed that you often do not take enough care with your work in your books. Your teachers give you wise advice when they mark your work but very few of you take it! This means you make the same mistakes again. Sometimes your work is neat and well presented but often it is untidy and occasionally unfinished. We have asked your teachers to make sure that you heed their advice. We are asking you all to take a pride in your work and always try to do your best. Make sure you take your teacher's advice. You need to be as good as you can be at English and mathematics to help you succeed in your future lives. We have also asked the school to help your parents or carers to give you help and encouragement at home. This will then give you all the help you need to make good progress. It is then up to you!

We wish you all the best for the future. Good luck in the SATs this week. We know you will do your best.

Best wishes

Mrs J Dawson

Lead Inspector