

St Mary's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100499
Local Authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	307408
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Wilson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	399
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M J De Lotbiniere
Headteacher	Ms C Hughes (Interim Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2002
School address	East Row North Kensington London W10 5AW
Telephone number	020 8969 0321
Fax number	020 8964 3122

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary RC Primary is a large school which serves an area of high social deprivation. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average, with the largest group being pupils of black Caribbean and black British origin. A well above average percentage of pupils speak English as an additional language, with Tagalog, Portuguese and Spanish being the most common. The mobility of pupils is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Saint Mary is a satisfactory school with some good features. It has been through a period of turbulence in recent years due to the substantial turnover in teaching staff and management team, resulting in a drop in the achievement of pupils. Although the school is still without a permanent headteacher, the staffing in the school is now stable. Led by the interim headteacher, considerable effort was placed last year into appointing and supporting new staff and developing a consistent approach to managing pupils. This has led to an improvement in the quality of teaching and, in turn, to improving standards.

Standards attained by pupils by the end of Year 6 are broadly average in all subject areas but pupils' reading and writing skills are better than their numerical skills. Satisfactory teaching enables pupils to make satisfactory progress as they move through the school, but higher attaining pupils, though making satisfactory progress, are not challenged sufficiently in lessons to do even better. The school provides good care and support for vulnerable pupils, pupils with learning difficulties and those speaking English as an additional language. As a result, these pupils progress at least as well as others in the school. Pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory but it is good in the Foundation Stage and also good in English.

A particular strength of the school is its warm and welcoming ethos in which relationships are good and all individuals are valued and well looked after. Pupils feel safe, are happy, enjoy school and behave well. The school develops them well personally. For example, pupils know about the importance of staying safe and healthy, behave well and are good at taking responsibility. Parents are very positive about the school, 'I am very pleased with St Mary's and feel that my child has progressed very well', was a typical comment.

The interim headteacher and recently appointed assistant headteachers, with the support of a consultant headteacher, have set in place a range of initiatives to improve the school. These include a good system for tracking pupils' academic progress and setting challenging targets, and arrangements to improve teaching further. Many of these initiatives are new and so they are not yet having an impact on pupils' attainment. The school has been accurate in the analysis of its main strengths and weaknesses. It has addressed the issue raised in the last inspection and has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. There is not, however, a whole school improvement plan which gives clear details of all the priorities and how they are to be achieved.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation stage is good. Children start in the Nursery with levels of attainment well below those expected for their age. They settle in quickly and make good progress, attaining at the expected level in most areas of learning by the end of the Reception year. This is because they are consistently well taught by experienced teachers, who have a good knowledge of how children learn. Childrens' progress is tracked well through careful assessment, and the information used to plan a stimulating and enriching curriculum. The school has been trying for some time to obtain the funding needed to develop the limited outdoor facilities but the existing space is well used by teachers. The Foundation Stage is well led and there is good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in mathematics by improving pupils' numerical skills.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that all pupils are sufficiently challenged in lessons.
- In order to secure sustained development, draw together the range of initiatives into a strategic plan that clearly identifies medium and long term priorities and measures of success.

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

Children start with well below average levels of knowledge, understanding and skills in the Foundation Stage. They make good progress because of the good teaching and well planned curriculum and attain standards that match or exceed those expected by the end of the Reception year.

Standards attained by pupils at both the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6 in national assessments are average but pupils do better in English than in mathematics. This is mainly because of the greater emphasis given to English in the curriculum. This leads to pupils' reading and writing skills being better than their numerical skills, for example pupils' knowledge of mathematical tables is not secure enough. Improvements in the quality of teaching over the past two years have led to improvements in pupils' progress each year. Pupils' overall progress and achievement are satisfactory, but higher attaining pupils do not make as much progress as they should because they are insufficiently challenged in lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties and those speaking English as an additional language make similar progress to other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Relationships in the school are good and pupils behave well. There are few incidents of bullying and very few exclusions. Pupils enjoy coming to school, 'My son enjoys school and looks forward to Monday mornings' was the comment of one parent. The rates of attendance in the school are satisfactory. Pupils have good knowledge of what they need to do to live a healthy lifestyle including eating well and taking exercise. They know some substances can be harmful and the effects they cause. They make a good contribution to the school and wider community, through work as prefects, being members of the school council, contributing to world charities and taking action to improve recycling. Pupils have good attitudes to work, are able to work together harmoniously and take responsibility well. Their good personal and social skills, coupled with their sound basic skills, enable them to be satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers are enthusiastic and have good relationships with their pupils. They use good strategies to manage their classrooms so that pupils behave well and are motivated to learn. They make good use of resources such as interactive white boards, which add interest and contribute to learning. Effective use of support staff enables pupils needing additional help to progress as well as others in the class. There is inconsistency, however, in the expectations by teachers of what pupils can achieve. The match of work to pupils' needs, particularly higher attaining pupils, is not always being challenging enough. Where teaching is good, expectations are high and work is challenging and carefully planned. The outcome is a marked improvement in pupils' progress. The recent introduction of targets for pupils is helping them know better what they have to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum appropriately emphasises literacy and numeracy but the stronger emphasis on literacy skills has contributed to pupils' more consistent progress in English, compared with mathematics. A variety of tasks makes learning interesting for pupils and music is a particular strength, with many pupils participating in musical activities including productions. The regular use of computers enables pupils to develop satisfactory information and communications technology (ICT) skills. The programme of additional support is well planned and well matched to pupils' needs enabling those pupils who need extra help to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. However, planning for the needs of higher attaining pupils is inconsistent.

The curriculum, both in lessons and additional activities, contributes well to pupils' personal development. For example, a Year 6 residential trip to the Isle of Wight encourages team work, perseverance and group problem-solving. Lunchtime and after school activities cover a broad range of themes, including languages, musical activities and sports, and they are well attended and valued by pupils. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of visits and visitors.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Teachers and support staff know pupils and their needs well and there is a high level of commitment amongst staff to caring for pupils. This good pastoral support has a positive impact on pupils' learning. For example, good use is made of teaching assistants to support more vulnerable pupils. Safeguarding procedures in the school such as first aid and arrangements for ensuring child protection are robust. Pupils say that they feel safe and have an adult that they can talk to if they have concerns. The school has taken positive action to improve attendance such as liaison with the Education Welfare Service and appointment of family support worker, but other strategies such as awards for class attendance are not used. Effective arrangements to keep track of pupils' academic progress systematically, as they move through the school, have only recently been established.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The interim headteacher has created a positive school environment for staff and pupils, with the focus on caring and respect. She is well supported by a consultant headteacher and two recently appointed assistant headteachers. Together with middle managers, they are providing a clear direction and sense of purpose, which is leading to improving standards. Good links have been established with other organisations and local schools which are contributing to the work of Saint Mary, for example through the appointment of a family support worker. The systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are satisfactory so leaders have a sound grasp of its main strengths and weaknesses. The underpinning processes of rigorously tracking pupils' progress, analysing data and using the information to set challenging targets are now in place, but they are still too new for their full impact to be apparent. Appropriate areas for improvement have been identified and, whilst there are plans to achieve some of them, planning for others is insufficiently detailed. There is no whole school improvement plan with the clear identification of priorities needed to help ensure developments are sustained and provide governors with the information they need to monitor improvement. Governors do, however, provide a satisfactory level of strategic planning. They support the school well and are committed to its improvement.

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

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?	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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	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 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

22 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's RC Primary School, London, W10 5AW

You may remember that three inspectors recently came to visit your school. We really enjoyed meeting you, your teachers and other people who work in the school. We are writing to let you know what we found out.

We think that you go to a satisfactory school. Your interim headteacher and your other teachers look after you well and we know that you enjoy school. You all make progress, but not all of you do as well as you are able, particularly in mathematics. You behave well, are polite and you look after one another. You develop good personal skills, such as self-confidence and being responsible and knowing how to stay safe and healthy.

We have made three suggestions as to what the school can do to improve further:

- Improve your skills in mathematics, such as your knowledge of tables, so that you achieve higher standards.
- Ensure that teachers provide more challenging learning tasks for those of you that can do them.
- Prioritise and plan the arrangements needed to improve the school further.

Thank you again for being so friendly. We enjoyed meeting you. I send you my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Wilson

Lead Inspector