

# St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100720
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lewisham
<b>Inspection number</b>	307456
<b>Inspection date</b>	13 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Barry Jones

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	210
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr D Mahony
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs C Winston
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	Howson Road Brockley London SE4 2BB
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8692 5055
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8691 0457

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how well children progress in the Foundation Stage and why
- why standards have declined over the last two years and whether this trend has been slowed or reversed
- what are the outstanding aspects of pupils' personal development, curriculum and care, support and guidance.

Evidence was gathered from performance data, external monitoring, observations of teaching and the work produced by pupils. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with parents, children, the chair of governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

The school is a little smaller than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is a little below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is well above average. Most of these have moderate learning or speech and language difficulties. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and for whom English is an additional language are higher than in most schools. The number of pupils joining and leaving the school at unusual times is a little higher than in most schools of this size. The school has Healthy Schools status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Mary Magdalen's is a good school. The headteacher leads a strong, dedicated staff team and together they have nurtured a thriving community where pupils achieve well. The Catholic ethos is integrated into the whole life of the school. This underpins the outstanding pastoral support and the pupils' excellent personal development. The parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and one wrote, 'Our children are very happy at the school and we feel that it is a good learning environment with supportive and caring staff'.

Children enter the school with skills that are below average and make a good start in the Reception class. Standards in the end of Year 6 national tests have fluctuated since the previous inspection. These initially rose sharply to be above average but have slipped in the last two years to being broadly average. This corresponds to a period when the school has received increased numbers of pupils with moderate learning difficulties and low language skills. Some of these pupils have joined late in Key Stage 2. The school has very good procedures for enabling these pupils to settle and they too make good progress. There is some variation between subjects. In 2007, pupils who took the tests in Year 6 did well in science and the proportion attaining the highest level was above average. Progress in English and mathematics has fallen in the last two years. In response, the school is taking robust action, particularly through careful monitoring and booster groups. These measures are not yet fully effective and the difference between subjects is still apparent in the current Year 6. The school's monitoring shows that there is more to do to meet the needs of the more able in mathematics and writing throughout the school. Given pupils' starting points, achievement is good overall. Pupils who have English as an additional language receive good support and this enables them to make good progress over time in their subjects too.

Provision in the school is good overall but there are some outstanding features. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and give pupils the confidence, knowledge and skills to succeed. They make effective use of information and communication technology to make lessons interesting and to enhance learning. The school is resourced very well with teaching assistants who they link effectively with teachers and make a significant contribution to pupils' good progress. Teachers manage their classes well and have forged excellent relationships within their classrooms. Pupils respond well and their behaviour is exemplary, both in and around the school. There is some outstanding teaching particularly in Reception and for older pupils, and consequently progress is most rapid in these classes. Pastoral care is excellent. It stems from the excellent steer from the headteacher and the commitment of all staff. The school's work is complemented by outstanding partnerships with others. Every child is valued and this principle is at the heart of everything that the school does. As a result, pupils feel very safe and take a full part in the work of the school and the wider community. The school council carries out its role very responsibly. They have been influential in improving playground facilities, including a 'buddy shelter', and are consulted on school policies. Pupils learn to collaborate and to respect different cultures. Visitors often comment on the excellent relationships and the very welcoming atmosphere in the school. These excellent personal qualities, together with their good progress in acquiring numeracy and literacy skills, mean that pupils are prepared well for moving on to secondary school.

Pupils are given a wide range of experiences both in class and through an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. The provision within the curriculum for numeracy, literacy is good and excellent for personal and social education. This contributes significantly to the pupils'

success in these areas and their excellent understanding of healthy-living issues. Themed weeks, such as science and engineering week, are planned regularly and visits and visitors add further to the richness of pupils' experiences. There are many opportunities for pupils to play a musical instrument or take part in a sporting activity. Enrichment activities are a real strength of the school. Staff are not complacent and are exploring ways of further enhancing the provision for more able pupil further. Pupils enjoy school very much as a result. They are proud of their school and are excellent ambassadors for it.

The headteacher provides very good, strong leadership. The senior managers have been effective in promoting high standards of care. For instance, the previous inspection found that attendance was below average. The school has tackled this very vigorously and attendance is now well above average. This also reflects pupils' very positive attitudes. Monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough and helps to maintain the good standards. There are comprehensive systems to track individual pupils' progress although opportunities are sometimes missed to determine trends for specific groups of pupils. The school acts robustly when underperformance is identified. The governing body acts effectively as a critical friend. Given its track record the school's capacity to improve further is good.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Parents comment positively on the very warm welcome that greets children on entering the Reception class. Communications with parents are very good and they are encouraged and supported to participate in their child's development. This helps children to settle very quickly. The teaching is good overall and children make good progress although they are still below average in several respects, including their mathematical development, when they enter Year 1. In two aspects the children make outstanding progress. Some children start school with low literacy skills. There is an appropriate emphasis on improving these skills. The teaching of reading is excellent. Consequently, pupils make outstanding progress in their ability to link sounds and letters. They also make outstanding progress in social aspects. Children are given good opportunities to act independently and this increases their confidence and boosts their self-esteem. This is balanced well by adult-led activities such that there is a good, balanced curriculum. The outdoor play area is limited but the school makes best use of its accommodation.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that pupils progress as well in writing and mathematics as they do in reading and science.

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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?	2
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

25 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School, London, SE4 2BB

Many thanks for the very warm welcome that you gave me when I inspected your school. You were very courteous and excellent ambassadors for your school. You told me how much you enjoy school because of the many interesting things to do and because of the very caring staff. Some of your school council members told me how they had helped to bring about improvements. For instance, they helped to design and build the 'buddy shelter' in the playground. They also spoke enthusiastically and showed me slides of their trip to the Houses of Parliament when they met their local Member. It was clearly a memorable trip.

I agree that yours is a good school. It also has some excellent features. These are the things I liked most.

- Your behaviour is exemplary.
- St Mary Magdalen's is a thriving family and you all get on well together.
- You develop into responsible, mature young people.
- You do well in your work.
- Children make a good start in the Reception class.
- You have good teachers.
- The adults in the school look after you exceptionally well.
- The school is very well led by the headteacher.

The school is always trying to be even better. We have requested that it makes sure you do as well in writing and mathematics as you do in reading and science.

I wish you continuing success in the future. Keep up the good work.

Barry Jones

Lead inspector