

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102670
Local Authority	Merton
Inspection number	308086
Inspection date	8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	David Marshall

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs V Marcus
Headteacher	Miss S Crouch
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Russell Road Wimbledon London SW19 1QL
Telephone number	020 8542 4580
Fax number	020 8542 5301

Age group	3-11
Inspection date	8 November 2007
Inspection number	308086

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the pupils' achievement, the quality of the school's curriculum and leadership and management. In addition, evidence was gathered from discussions and school documentation to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and its arrangements for the pupils' care, guidance and support. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection 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 in this report.

Description of the school

St. Mary's is a very popular, over-subscribed, Catholic voluntary aided primary school, situated close to Wimbledon town centre. The school has changed from its first school status and from September 2007 has become an all-through, one-form entry school. The reorganisation has enabled a new computer suite, music room, classroom and group work area to be built. The social mix of the school is very varied with a large proportion of pupils living in social housing. The intake is mixed with the majority of pupils from a White British background and large Irish, Asian and Black African ethnic groups. Pupils travel from Wimbledon Park, Morden and Mitcham to attend the school for its religious character. A higher than average proportion of pupils speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is also above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Mary's provides an outstanding education for all of its pupils. Over many years, the school has persevered to reflect its Catholic traditions in providing a welcoming and inclusive school that values every pupil. Today it succeeds exceptionally well. Almost all parents justifiably praise the school for the way it focuses on meeting the needs of every child. As one parent stressed, speaking on behalf of many, 'My experience of the school is that it embraces the concept of the whole child in a loving, caring and warm environment. It gives pupils the opportunity to develop their own personality and encourages them to be polite and respectful.' It is not surprising that the pupils agree on how happy they are because teachers make learning fun and really care for them.

The headteacher, deputy head, new curriculum teams and governors provide highly effective leadership. The school's view of itself is accurate. Their track record over many years of raising standards through their very effective monitoring systems shows that it has an excellent capacity to continue improving. There are very rewarding partnerships with the community, the local church and with other schools and organisations.

Throughout the school, pupils achieve extremely well and are inquisitive learners. They enter the school with skills and understanding that vary but are usually broadly in line with, or just above, those expected for their age. Very effective organisation and very careful assessments enable pupils to make excellent progress immediately. Standards at the end of Year 2 are significantly above average and the more able pupils do especially well. Much of the pupils' success in reading and writing is due to the school's strong emphasis on developing speaking and listening skills. By the time they leave, standards are consistently exceptionally high because the teaching is excellent. Individual improvement targets and outstanding support for pupils of all abilities consistently raise pupils' levels of achievement significantly. Provisional national test results in Year 6 in 2007 exceeded the school's carefully formulated and challenging targets and were very high. Results overall put the school in the top ten per cent of school's nationally. This level of achievement has been consistently maintained over a number of years. There is an upward trend in standards across a wide range of subjects and, in particular, there are many opportunities for pupils to develop their musical talents. For example, the standard of singing witnessed during the inspection was outstanding.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Throughout the school relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and contribute to the positive ethos for study. As a result, the atmosphere for learning created by the whole staff is supportive and caring. As one parent said, 'Children at St Mary's are not just educated, they are nurtured and appreciated as individuals.' There is outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage, where teachers plan stimulating and challenging activities for the children. The overall outstanding care begins in the Nursery and gives the children a real sense of determining their own way forward and guarantees their full involvement in all activities. Throughout the rest of the school, teaching and learning are often outstanding. Lessons are very well planned, making sure that all pupils enjoy learning. Assessment information collected about pupils is used particularly well to ensure that the least able and most vulnerable pupils make outstanding progress. This is achieved by providing excellent support from the very experienced teaching assistants wherever it is needed. More able pupils are also challenged well through a good range of additional activities.

Staff are vigilant to pupils' needs, enabling them all to learn and play in a safe and secure learning environment. Through the school's excellent programme for personal, social, health and emotional development (PSHE) the pupils excel in making choices. It was an object lesson in how pupils can take responsibility for their own school to hear them describing how and why the excellent changes to the outside areas had been discussed and determined. Needless to say their enjoyment of these areas is easy to see. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They show very caring attitudes to each other and the environment. They learn to respect children from different backgrounds and have an excellent understanding of healthy living and keeping safe.

The new headteacher provides first-rate leadership. Parents were concerned over the change of leadership after the previous headteacher's long and much appreciated time in post. However, many wrote to say their fears had been groundless. One summed this up by saying she, 'has been an incredibly supportive headteacher, making a really positive impact in a very short time.' Teamwork is excellent. The innovation of the recently formed staff teams has refocused the staff on the curriculum. Although the curriculum covers all subjects well and the staff provide countless opportunities for individual pupils to shine, they are working on ways of linking all areas of learning to ensure their lessons continue to be as exciting and relevant as they can make them. The excellent governing body is fully involved in this process as they play a very successful part in supporting and challenging the school. Financial decisions are taken in the best interests of all pupils. The seamless way in which the change from being a First school to an all-through primary has been managed, is testament to their effectiveness. They are firm in their resolve to provide the very best for every child in their care. They are being successful in this aim and would be gratified to hear how positive so many parents are. One parent summed up their praise by writing, 'This is an excellent school: it could not be any better! It is a very caring school and all members of staff are polite and helpful. It feels like a family to us.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Parents' comments mirror the inspection judgements about the excellent provision in the Foundation Stage, where the staff plan enjoyable and challenging activities for the children. One parent wrote, 'My child has been attending morning Nursery since January 2007 and loves it, even asks at weekends if he can go to school.' Careful planning gives the children a real sense of determining their own way forward and guarantees their full involvement in all activities. Adults have high expectations, provide very clear routines and enable children to build strong, positive relationships. The school's stated aim to improve children's personal and social education through turn-taking games and circle time activities is clearly already being successful. The enthusiasm and enjoyment of the children in Reception, and the Nursery who joined them for an afternoon phonics session, was a good indication of how successful the organisation is. The rooms available are stimulating and resources are used well. A very calm and purposeful atmosphere is created where the children are already making excellent progress. Staff have already got to know the children very well. They make a careful note of all responses and feedback. The information collected about children is used particularly well to ensure that the least able and most vulnerable settle well. The very well resourced outside areas provide the same exciting level of challenge and stimulation, especially for the more capable children.

What the school should do to improve further

- The school should further refine the curriculum to make sure that teachers' planning makes pupils' work as exciting and relevant as it can be.

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
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

15 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, London, SW19 1QL

Thank you for making me so welcome in your school and talking to me about your feelings, ambitions and thoughts. It was a delight to meet you and I really enjoyed looking at your work and joining in your lessons.

I am glad to tell you that I think your school is outstanding and provides you with a really good start to your education. I was particularly pleased with these things:

- Your headteacher and staff do a super job in organising the school and looking after you.
- You all really enjoy being in school.
- You are all making excellent progress with your work.
- You behave very well, work hard and listen carefully to your teachers - all of this helps you to succeed.
- All the adults in the school look after you very carefully. They always make sure that you get help if you need it.

Your teachers and support staff work hard to help you to do as well as you can. I have asked them to make sure they carry on changing their planning to make sure that all your lessons are as exciting and interesting as possible. You can help by continuing to listen carefully and take note of what they say. Then you will all continue to make excellent progress in your learning.

I wish you well in the future and hope that you will always be as happy as you are at St Mary's.

David Marshall

Lead Inspector