

St Mary of The Angels Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104240
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	308551
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

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	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Leadbeater
Headteacher	Breda Helm
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2004
School address	Weston Crescent Aldridge Walsall WS9 0HA
Telephone number	01922 745935
Fax number	01922 743411

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Fifty per cent of pupils come from out-of-catchment areas to attend this school. The vast majority of pupils come from average socio-economic backgrounds and attainment on entry matches that expected nationally. The school has recently admitted a very small number of Polish pupils who have English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils behave in an exemplary manner due to the outstanding provision made for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school provides a good quality of education for its pupils and fulfils its mission statement of 'aiming to create a happy, orderly environment where all members feel secure, valued and respected.'

'We are happy here', said one member of the school council, 'because all our teachers really care about us and want us to do our best.' From average attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage, children make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning, other than personal, social and emotional development where they exceed national expectations and make good progress. This good achievement sets the foundation for the exemplary behaviour of pupils as they move up the school. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good because of the good care, guidance and support they receive from the staff. Pupils know about healthy eating, not talking to strangers and keeping safe. They are well prepared for secondary school because of the high standards they attain and they make a good contribution to the community by taking part in church liturgy and collecting monies for those less fortunate than themselves.

Standards, by the end of Year 6, are above average in English, mathematics and science and pupils make good progress and achieve well. By the end of Year 2, standards are above average in speaking and listening, reading and mathematics and are average in science and writing, because pupils do not write enough about what they do and spelling is weak. Pupils generally achieve well in relation to their prior attainment but, on occasions, more capable pupils are not sufficiently challenged in lessons, although the school compensates for this through the good range of enrichment activities it provides for them. The school has good procedures for tracking pupils' progress but the information is not always translated into curriculum planning and, at times, more capable pupils are consolidating learning rather than acquiring new skills. Teaching and learning are good and learning opportunities offered are interesting, resulting in pupils wanting to learn. Pupils learn well but, from time to time, teachers miss opportunities to help them develop their skills of independence and research. The vast majority of parents are really pleased with their children's progress. Typical comments from the parental survey included: 'We are happy with the school's values, our children are well looked after and they love school'.

Good leadership and management are key factors contributing to the school's success. The headteacher's quiet and purposeful style generates tremendous respect from her pupils: 'She's ok, our headteacher, she cares about us and wants us to do really well but, best of all, she is very fair' said one pupil, speaking for many. The headteacher is supported well by her committed staff. Leadership responsibilities are effectively shared and all staff know the school's strengths and areas for development. Performance is systematically reviewed and the school regularly meets its challenging targets. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well by providing good support and challenge. All staff are committed to improving on previous best performance. Capacity for improvement is good, as demonstrated by the improved assessment procedures, extra-curricular activities, the quality of teachers' marking and improved standards in mathematics in Year 2.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Standards and achievement and provision in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Whilst the school has done much to improve resources in the Foundation Stage and the outdoor area is now well equipped as a classroom, there is still room for improvement in ensuring that children make better progress in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. A strength of the Foundation Stage is the good emphasis placed on the well-being of children. Satisfactory teaching and a lively curriculum give children a sound start but more capable children are not always making fast enough progress because too few opportunities are given for them to record their work. Teaching staff are very caring and provide stimulating learning activities but it is only this year that accurate assessment of children's learning has been put in place. Staff are becoming familiar with using information from assessment to plan the next steps of learning but, at times, children repeat work that they already knew. The good relationships in the Foundation Stage provide a high level of security for children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that pupils in Years 1 and 2 are given more opportunities to develop their writing skills, especially in science, and improve their spelling in English
- use information from assessments to challenge more capable pupils in their learning and ensure that pupils throughout the school are given more opportunities to develop their skills of independent learning
- improve the rates of children's progress in the Foundation Stage in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development to match that made in personal, social and emotional development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average in English, mathematics and science, and pupils' achievements are good. From average starting points in the nursery, children make satisfactory progress but this picks up as they move up the school because of the high expectations teachers have of their pupils, especially in Years 2, 5 and 6. By the end of Year 2, standards are above average in reading and mathematics and average in science and writing. The expert and thorough teaching of 'companion reading' has moved pupils' learning on very quickly. However, too many spelling mistakes are made in writing in the younger classes and pupils are not given sufficient opportunities in science to write and record their experiments, due to an over-emphasis on worksheets. Challenging targets are set which are regularly met but, at times, more capable pupils are not stretched enough and their rates of progress slow down. Pupils with learning difficulties and the few who have English as an additional language make good progress because they have well-focused support, and activities build effectively on their previous learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and this contributes to their exemplary behaviour. Playground pals do an exceptionally good job at including everyone in lunchtime play. Pupils play safely and know how to take care of themselves. These features contribute to their positive attitudes to

learning and good attendance. Pupils make good choices about their diet and take regular exercise. They contribute exceptionally well to the wider community by leading prayers during Mass and supporting a very wide range of charities. School council members, under the expert guidance of the headteacher, are encouraged to voice their opinions. 'Our headteacher has this great way of taking what you say and make it sound really adult and important', said one of the school council members. Pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and contribute to pupils' good attitudes to learning. All teachers have thorough knowledge of the teaching of basic skills, and the good teaching of reading in Years 1 and 2 has enabled pupils to acquire skills at a fast rate. In Years 1 to 6, teachers give very clear explanations so that pupils know what is expected of them. However, not all teachers push the more capable pupils enough. This is because, at times, information from assessment is not used to plan the next steps of pupils' learning. Many pupils in Years 1 and 2 say that they find the science work too easy. In all classes, teachers use ICT well to support pupils' learning. In an outstanding English lesson in the upper juniors, pupils used ICT to research facts about a well-known author but this practice is not sufficiently well developed in other year groups. Teaching in this school is thorough and rigorous, resulting in high standards but it could be even better if pupils were given autonomy to plan and organise their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good range of learning experiences and each year group goes on an educational visit to support their learning. The strong focus the school places on developing pupils' personal skills, health and well-being enables pupils to have a clear understanding of how to be good citizens. Pupils make very good use of the wide and exciting range of activities outside normal lessons, especially when they visit the local secondary school. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their writing in other subjects such as religious education but insufficient opportunities are provided for research and self-study.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust and parents are right to think that their children are well cared for. Pupils love their teachers and say that they are very kind to them. One Year 3 pupil said, 'Our teachers always listen to our point of view and help us make correct decisions. They are very kind and we always have someone to share our troubles with'. This good level of care contributes well to pupils' personal development and well-being. All pupils have targets for improvement but these are not consistently used across the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language are fully supported by caring staff and are fully aware of their targets for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership and management of the school is a contributory factor to the high standards that pupils attain. Good systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the school's work, such as regular evaluation of teaching and learning, analysis of data and pupils' work in books, but do not yet include consulting pupils about what helps them learn best. Subject leaders perform their duties well and they are very knowledgeable about standards in their subject. The headteacher has provided a very clear educational direction for the school and is relentless in her quest for developing each child to their full potential. 'Our headteacher is great, you can tell her anything and she sorts it in this school because she is wise', is a typical response from pupils in this school.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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	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 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?	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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School, Walsall WS9 0HA

Thank you for making us feel so welcome, and for sharing with us your views of your school. We agree with you; we think that you go to a good school and we certainly think that you get a good quality of education. Your behaviour is outstanding and that is because your teachers provide some excellent opportunities for you to pray and collaborate with one another. You clearly understand right from wrong and you respect and value one another's differences.

We think that your teachers teach you well but in the Foundation Stage, they could help you more in writing and number work. In Years 1 and 2, you could help your teachers by improving your writing (spelling) and write more about the experiments you undertake in science. Those of you who find learning easy could be doing more by developing your research skills and organising your own learning. This will help you become even more independent in learning. We have asked your teachers to use information that they have from your test results to challenge you even more in lessons. This should keep you on your toes!

We are very impressed with the way you collect money for charities. This is indeed very generous of you and it is so pleasing to note how well you participate in the life of the church, by leading prayers and singing at Mass. You participate very well in all of the extra-curricular clubs offered to you, and those of you who attend the local secondary school for extra work have really come on in your learning. You have good attitudes to learning and you take your responsibilities very seriously. It's good to see the playground pals scheme being such a success. Well done for persevering with your reading - you really have made good progress!

We are delighted to see how much you enjoy school and hope that this enthusiasm continues for the rest of your life. God bless.

Yours sincerely

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley Lead inspector

8 November 2007



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Walsall WS9 0HA**

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