

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Wolverhampton

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 104375               |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Wolverhampton        |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 308583               |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 19–20 September 2007 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | David Martin HMI     |

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>                | 2–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 354  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Gerard Kelly   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Ailsa Griffiths  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 14 June 2004   |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Cannock Road<br>Fallings Park<br>Wolverhampton<br>WV10 8PG |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01902 556355   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01902 556356   |

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school serves an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. Most pupils are of White British heritage, although the cultural mix is changing as East European immigrants and African Commonwealth and asylum-seeking families are located in the area. The school has a number of pupils from Traveller backgrounds. A higher proportion of pupils than average are from minority ethnic heritages, many of whom do not speak English as a first language. While just over half of pupils are baptised Catholics, the school also welcomes those from other or no faith backgrounds. There are significant mobility issues. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is around average. Attainment on entry to the nursery for most children is well below nationally expected levels and particularly so in terms of their communication, language and literacy skills.

## 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's Catholic Primary is a good school where standards have improved significantly in the last two years. The school has many strengths, but the good care, guidance and support offered to pupils are the cornerstone of its work. A strong Catholic ethos and sense of community, together with dedicated day-to-day care, increases pupils' self-confidence and helps them to develop good personal and social skills as they move through the school. Pupils and parents also told inspectors how much they enjoyed school and this pleasure in learning was evident during the inspection.

Many parents, governors and staff believe that marked recent improvements date from the current headteacher taking up post after a period of some turbulence. She has certainly brought a fresh impetus and drive to the school through her own personal example, by forming a highly effective senior leadership team. This has resulted in school improvement planning that is clearly focused on a few key priorities to drive the school forward, successfully addressing issues from the previous inspection. Governors are highly supportive and well informed through regular personal contact with pupils, staff and parents. Parents are welcomed into the school and their contribution to the education of their children is actively promoted. The work of the school is closely monitored, evaluated and where weaknesses are identified, robust action is taken to improve provision. The school knows itself-well and has a good capacity to improve further, setting challenging targets for future performance.

This good leadership has led to many recent improvements in provision while building on the strong care, guidance and support. Attendance has improved to average. Classroom practice has improved through careful attention to planning and curriculum design. There is an expectation of team working amongst staff, with effective support offered by some outstanding classroom teachers. This is improving the general quality of teaching, although it is not wholly consistent across the school. The use of assessment data at classroom and whole-school level is strong. It has made a major contribution to raising the expectations of pupils, staff and parents, who now understand what the pupils can achieve. As a result, pupils' progress is monitored carefully, pupils are aware of their targets and assessment successfully informs future lesson planning. The curriculum has been reviewed to strengthen elements of personal and social education and information and communication technology (ICT) provision. Although improved, ICT is not yet having a full impact on teaching and learning, particularly the potential of interactive whiteboards to excite and stimulate creative learning. There are few opportunities for pupils to develop enterprise skills and more remains to be done to reach the Healthy Schools status.

Most importantly, standards throughout the school have risen sharply and are close to the national average. Recent national test results in Year 2 and Year 6 show significant increases in all subject areas. The progress made by pupils from low starting points on entry is good. No groups of pupils underachieve, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those joining the school at other than the usual time often make remarkable progress.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage, including the Nursery, is good. Children in the Nursery are helped to settle very quickly. The nurture group provides good intensive support for those

children who have additional needs. The Foundation Stage curriculum is appropriately planned and taught, with the whole team planning together to ensure continuity. Children are engaged at all times and activities are chosen carefully to match their needs. In a calm and industrious environment, speaking and listening skills are encouraged at every opportunity. There is accurate assessment of children's abilities on entry and the school demonstrates that children make sound progress towards their early learning goals. Children enter school below expected levels and despite making good progress, they remain below the level expected at the end of the Foundation Stage.

Through shared activity time and structured choice of activities children are free to choose from a range of activities within the classrooms. Through this, children are able to make friendships and gain confidence from exploring activities independently. The playground has been painted to incorporate a number line and a train track and exploratory play is encouraged in this safe and supervised setting. A verandah has been built on to develop a role-play area which again supports the development of speaking and listening.

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

- Improve the consistency of teaching to ensure that pupils' progress is sustained year on year.
- Use ICT (particularly interactive whiteboards) more effectively to improve teaching and learning and to raise standards further.
- Increase pupils' awareness of healthy eating, exercise and enterprise to prepare them fully for their future lives.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enter the school well below the expected levels. This is particularly true of their communication, language and literacy skills. The impressive provision enables children to make good progress in the Nursery and Foundation Stage but they are still below age-related expectations at the start of Year 1.

Attainment at the end of Year 2 is improving steadily towards the national average. Standards in writing and mathematics are considerably higher in 2007 than the previous year and are now broadly average. Improvements in reading were sustained from 2006.

Standards at the end of Year 6 have improved and have been broadly in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science for the last two years. Previously, results had been significantly below expected levels. In 2007, improvements have been sustained in English and a significant improvement has been made in mathematics. Science results have fallen back a little from the significant increase in 2006. The progress made by pupils in 2006 puts the school in the top quarter of all schools nationally. In 2007, the same measure is likely to find progress in English and mathematics to be similarly high, while progress in science is at least at expected levels.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Personal development and well-being, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. It is a multicultural school which celebrates diversity and uses its own diversity to educate pupils about tolerance and understanding. Pupils and parents say that they enjoy school and this is evident in the rising attendance figures, which are now satisfactory.

The positive relationships that exist between staff and pupils ensure that pupils feel supported and cared for during their lessons. There is a warmth throughout the school which enables pupils to develop both self-esteem and confidence. Behaviour throughout the school is good. Pupils move around the school in an orderly fashion and they are polite and helpful to adults.

Pupils say that initiatives such as the peer supporters help them to feel safe, particularly during breaks. Pupils are aware of the basics of staying healthy although they are not always able to make healthy choices. The pupils have been involved in supporting charities and understand their place in the community. Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are developing to ensure that pupils are adequately prepared for their future life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching is satisfactory overall. The teaching seen during the inspection included several outstanding lessons but also a small number that were inadequate or only just satisfactory. This closely matches the school's own evaluation.

In the better lessons, work is matched closely to pupils' abilities and the pace is good. Developmental marking identifies how pupils can improve their work and time is given for reflection. In the most effective classes, pupils are aware of their targets and can monitor their own progress towards achieving these. Learning objectives are closely linked to current targets and teachers are able to identify the next steps of learning for pupils.

In other lessons seen there was insufficient pace and challenge. There was some lack of subject knowledge in some foundation subjects. Use of ICT across the curriculum is developing throughout the school but there is little evidence of imaginative use of interactive whiteboards. Although planning is generally good, teaching is too inconsistent.

Teachers and support staff have good relationships with the pupils, creating a positive working environment. Support staff are well deployed to support targeted individuals or groups of pupils. Behaviour is good and strategies such as word banks and paired working encourage independent learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum covers all expected requirements and is under regular revision to meet pupils' changing needs. Areas recently identified as weaker, such as ICT and personal, social and health education, are developing well, although not yet contributing fully in terms of enriching lessons and preparing pupils for their future lives.

Planning and schemes of work are very good and revised in the light of the assessment of pupils' progress against learning targets. Pupils feel that teachers help them improve through marking, self-assessment and setting targets. Pupils are encouraged to talk to each other about their work and to develop positive 'can do' attitudes; they are articulate and enjoy talking about their school.

A wide range of good enrichment activities in areas such as sport, art and music provides a great sense of enjoyment. Visits and visitors introduce pupils to other cultures and wider out of school experiences. Pupils contribute strongly to the local community through fund raising

activities and participation in national and local events, for example Kick Racism out of Football. Links with the church community are very strong and this has a positive impact on the curriculum.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

A clear Catholic ethos is embedded in the school which leads to good pastoral support for pupils. Day-to-day care is good and the school enjoys positive relationships with parents. Pupils receive a good level of support, particularly those in the early stages of learning English or with additional learning needs. There are effective and thorough procedures for keeping pupils safe. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are monitored closely. The school works well with other agencies, including the Traveller services, to ensure that pupils receive appropriate support and guidance. The school is aware of the needs of its vulnerable pupils and strives to support these pupils through after school clubs and activities during the summer.

Academic guidance is very good. Use of curricular targets throughout the school in English and mathematics supports pupils' learning and ensures that pupils know what they need to achieve to make progress. The school places importance on increasing the involvement of parents in their children's learning. It provides opportunities such as information evenings where parents can learn how they can best support their children's education.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher took up post following a difficult period in leadership, having previously been deputy headteacher at the school. She has provided a fresh impetus and direction for the school and has built a highly effective leadership team. This leadership team is responsible for the recent progress made by pupils and in driving forward improvements, particularly in the effective use of monitoring and target-setting.

The school improvement plan is a concise document clearly focused on key areas identified for improvement, both in the short and medium term. This forms the basis of targeted action, with thorough monitoring and evaluation of practice leading to the school knowing its strengths and weaknesses well. Issues arising from the previous inspection have been resolved. Classroom practice, although improving, remains inconsistent despite monitoring, support and training activities. This is partly owing to difficulties in recruitment and a number of less experienced teachers. Subject leaders are held accountable for developments and standards in their areas.

Governors are supportive and well informed, having first-hand knowledge of linked subjects through visits and discussions with staff. They have an effective committee structure that helps them to hold the school to account and ask searching questions of school managers.

The school is exceedingly smart and well maintained, providing a stimulating environment for pupils to learn and play together. Financial management is robust and the school provides good value for money.

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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 |
|---|----------------|

### 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   | 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?                                  | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 3 |
| 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 |

<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  |

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Wolverhampton, WV10 8PG

You will remember that we visited your school recently to see you at work. We would now like to tell you what we found out through talking with you and watching you in class and at play together.

There are many good things about your school. You are really well cared for by all the adults and as a result, grow and develop into caring, polite and friendly pupils. You clearly enjoy school and care for each other and your church community.

Your teachers plan work very well, and they check that you are making good progress with your learning. Many of you were very keen to talk to us about your targets and were proud when you did something well and pleased about the successes of your friends. The results that pupils have achieved in the national tests over the last two years have been good. You are also making good progress, as we saw in lessons and in looking at your books. This will prepare you for success in the future when you move on to your next school.

The headteacher, governors and senior staff run your school well. They are always looking for ways to give you better equipment for example, the computers and interactive whiteboards. They are also helping your teachers to make lessons as interesting as they possibly can.

Even a good school can improve. We have asked your headteacher to work with your teachers to try to make all lessons as good as the best. We think that you and the teachers can all use ICT even more to make lessons exciting. We would also like you to learn more about being healthy and to be fully prepared for your life as adults. You can all help by being active and making good choices as well as continuing to work hard.

Finally, I would like to thank you, on behalf of all the inspectors, for your friendliness and for sharing your work and your thoughts about the school with us. It was a delight to spend two days with you.

Yours faithfully

David Martin Her Majesty's Inspector



21 September 2007

Dear Pupils

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Wolverhampton, WV10 8PG**

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Finally, I would like to thank you, on behalf of all the inspectors, for your friendliness and for sharing your work and your thoughts about the school with us. It was a delight to spend two days with you.

Yours faithfully

David Martin  
Her Majesty's Inspector