

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Edlington

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106773
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	309231
Inspection dates	28–29 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Fiona Gowers

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	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Patrick O'Connor
Headteacher	Mrs Isobel Dugher
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Bungalow Road Edlington Doncaster South Yorkshire DN12 1DL
Telephone number	01709 863280
Fax number	01709 865024

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average-sized Catholic primary school serves an area with a significant level of social and economic disadvantage. Most children are White British. A few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has received the Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark and the Bronze Eco Schools Award.

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 is a good school. Close links with the Church and community are fundamental. St Mary's is especially successful in promoting pupils' personal development and well-being, which is outstanding. Working in teams is highly valued and children enjoy contributing to their school and local communities. For example, pupils on the school council and eco group play a leading role in developing a 'greener' school, by establishing a wildlife garden, taking the lead on recycling and strongly encouraging others to switch lights off during playtimes!

The good level of care, support and guidance is very much appreciated by parents; 'All staff at school are warm and friendly. They are quick to address any concerns. Equally they are very quick to praise the children.' Academic guidance is improving and many children know their targets and how to improve their work further. Recently introduced systems to check children's performance are effective. They are giving the school's leadership a clearer picture of how well individual groups are achieving.

Children get off to a particularly good start in the Foundation Stage, where they develop very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils work hard and make good progress throughout school, from the youngest 'Tigers' right up to the oldest pupils in the 'Shakespeare' class. By the time they leave school at the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average. All groups of pupils, including those who find learning difficult and those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language, make good progress and achieve well as they move up through the school. They make good progress because of good teaching. Staff at school know the children well. Classroom management is very effective and exceptionally good behaviour is a feature of almost all lessons. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievement.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school acknowledges that opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across a range of subjects are currently underdeveloped. The curriculum provides a wealth of interesting additional activities. One technology project involved the pupils in designing and making models to improve the life of people with disabilities, whereas another project involved pupils working well together to successfully win the 'Best School Float' award for the Edlington gala.

The headteacher, school leaders and governors share a clear view of school improvement. Planning identifies the right priorities for development and has led to good achievement and good improvement since the last inspection. The criteria by which improvements can be measured, however, are not always precise enough. This can make success difficult for school leaders, staff and governors to monitor. The school enjoys a very positive reputation within the local community and good links with local authority services and other education providers. It has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage has improved significantly since the last inspection. The Foundation Stage leader has successfully established an attractive unit, where children make good progress in all areas of learning, and are now making more rapid progress with early writing and mathematics skills. Parents very much appreciate the warm, calm, caring environment. When they join the Foundation Stage, children's skills are well below those expected for their age. Thorough assessments ensure learning activities are well matched to children's needs. Children

enjoy taking part in the good range of stimulating activities around the topic being covered. A recent visit to a fire station motivated children to write thank you letters, work in their 'fire station', as well as having a go at putting out their pretend fires outdoors! The strong hard-working staff team work well together to improve the quality of the learning activities further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the curriculum to provide more exciting and challenging opportunities for pupils to consolidate and improve their learning of key skills across a range of subjects.
- Sharpen the focus of school improvement planning so that teachers and school leaders can more effectively measure the success of new initiatives.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Good teaching enables pupils to make good progress and generally reach broadly average standards from their well below average starting points. In Years 1 and 2 pupils build well on previous learning and make good progress in all subjects. There are signs of accelerated progress, following the significant improvements in the Foundation Stage. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 6, standards are highest in mathematics, with the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 being similar to the national picture. Standards in writing are just below average. Standards fluctuate from year to year because of the differing abilities of small year groups taking the national tests and assessments. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the carefully focused work provided and the effective support of well deployed teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils show great respect for each other and those of other cultures, such as through the strong school links with Africa. Children feel very safe and secure and flourish in the warm, caring environment. 'Everyone at our school is supportive and friendly,' commented a group of children. Very strong relationships foster excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils show high levels of care and concern for others in the school community, as playground leaders, and in the wider community, through charitable fund-raising. Attendance is broadly average and staff work very hard to maintain a positive trend. Pupils clearly know how to stay fit and healthy, readily taking part in a wide range of sporting initiatives, as well as eating vegetables they grow in the school garden.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have good subject knowledge and very strong relationships lead to a positive atmosphere. 'All the staff are very approachable and understanding,' is a view shared by many parents and pupils alike. Pupils work hard and develop very positive attitudes to learning. In the most effective lessons, speaking and listening activities and partner work challenge the children to think and explore new ideas.

In occasional lessons, pupils are not stretched and challenged enough and, consequently, do not make as much progress as they are capable of. Teaching assistants responsible for working with pupils who may need extra support or to challenge more able pupils, sensitively use a range of skills and expertise to help them make good progress. Some marking is good and provides clear guidance for improvement, although sometimes children are not so sure how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is satisfactory. Statutory requirements are met. Links between subjects are not well established and opportunities are missed to develop literacy and numeracy skills in lessons other than English and mathematics. More stimulating learning occurs when subjects are combined and pupils have the opportunity to work in groups and find things out for themselves. This makes learning more relevant and exciting. Pupils enjoy taking part in a wide range of clubs and enrichment activities, ranging from netball and tag-rugby, to going on a retreat and to building a 'time capsule' to be buried in the foundations of local building works. These enhance the personal development and often fitness levels of those who participate.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides an extremely caring and supportive environment in which pupils feel very happy, safe and valued. Safeguarding procedures are in place. The provision for the most vulnerable pupils is outstanding because of the very careful monitoring and high quality of intervention and support. Pupils say, 'If you've got a problem all teachers are very supportive.' Many appreciate the exemplary care in the Rainbow Group and the Care Slot. Academic guidance is improving through the recent introduction of more detailed writing targets. They are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language receive good individual support both within the school and through well established links with outside agencies. The school effectively meets the full range of pupil's needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and school leadership team foster strong relationships. There is a strong team spirit, where everyone's contribution is valued and people genuinely care for each other. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils achieve well, they have excellent personal and social skills and the provision in the Foundation Stage has been significantly enhanced. School leaders and staff have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Subject leadership is particularly strong in English and the school has correctly identified raising standards in writing as an area for improvement. Self-evaluation is effective. Planning identifies the right priorities for improvement, but at times is not quite as clear as it might be about how these priorities are checked and monitored. The governors are extremely supportive of the school and particularly proud of the school's ethos and pastoral care, as summarised in their comment; 'When you come to St Mary's you want to smile!'

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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?	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?	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?	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

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Edlington, Doncaster, DN12 1DL

Thank you very much for helping us with our work when we visited your school.

We enjoyed meeting you and talking with you. St Mary's is a good school and you are right to be proud of your school. Your parents are pleased that you go there and find everybody welcoming and caring.

These are the things that we found are best about your school. You work very hard and are making good progress with your work- from the youngest 'Tigers' right up to the oldest pupils in 'Shakespeare'! You are very well behaved and polite. We like the way you are encouraged to have a say in what goes on at school both in lessons and through the class and school council. You have worked hard to improve your school by developing the wildlife garden and making sure everyone recycles paper and switches lights off at playtimes.

The adults at school look after you very well so you feel safe and confident about asking them for help or talking to them about any worries. The school is extremely good at giving special help to those of you who need it.

You enjoy taking part in many exciting clubs and activities. We have asked your headteacher and teachers to help you learn by making sure you use your English and mathematics skills well in other subjects and for you to do more exciting projects. We have also asked them to make the school's plan on how it could get even better more detailed.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection at school. Keep working hard and enjoying your school!

We wish you well in the future.