

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112916
Local Authority	City of Derby LA
Inspection number	311050
Inspection date	27 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Susan Aldridge

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	358
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Maginnis
Headteacher	Mrs A C Greaves
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2003
School address	Broadway Derby Derbyshire DE22 1AU
Telephone number	01332 554831
Fax number	01332 553972

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Introduction

An Additional Inspector carried out the inspection in one day. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the impact of recent changes on the progress pupils were making in writing, improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' attendance. Evidence was gathered from data supplied by the school, discussions with governors, staff and pupils and direct observation of teaching and learning. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but there was no evidence found 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 the report.

Description of the school

This is a very large school. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. About a quarter belong to minority ethnic groups, which is above average. A significant minority speak English as an additional language; they are mainly Polish. The proportion eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the percentage with learning difficulties or disabilities. Pupils come from a wide variety of socio-economic circumstances. A higher than average proportion leave or join the school other than at the usual time. The school provides extended services to the local community in the form of before and after-school care, as well as care during the school holidays. A new headteacher was appointed to the school in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's effectiveness is satisfactory with some good features, and this is how it sees itself. The great majority of parents are pleased with the school, and pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to it. They are well cared for and the good relationships between staff and pupils create a harmonious environment where pupils feel safe and secure. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their time at the school because it provides a satisfactory quality of education. When children enter Reception, most have the knowledge and skills expected of their age, and by the time they reach Year 6, standards are average overall. However, there are differences between subjects. In Year 6, standards in science are usually above average, whereas those in English and mathematics are average. Better achievement in science is linked to the use of investigative and active approaches in lessons, which give pupils good participation and enjoyment. A greater proportion of pupils reach Level 5 in science than in English and mathematics. There are suitable plans in place to improve the curriculum and to raise the attainment of more able pupils in both subjects. In Years 2 and 6, standards in writing are not as high as they are in reading, particularly amongst boys. The school recognises this, and has taken appropriate action. For instance, classes have prompts clearly displayed so that pupils are reminded how to check their own writing. There are clear signs that pupils' progress in writing has accelerated in recent months, and some individuals have made impressive gains. Pupils from different groups make similar progress. Those who speak English as an additional language or who find learning difficult receive the necessary support to enable them to make satisfactory progress.

Although teaching is satisfactory, it is improving steadily and there is a growing proportion of good teaching, particularly in English. Since the headteacher arrived, she has worked closely with staff to agree what constitutes good teaching. There has been training for all on how best to encourage writing, for instance by using more visual aids and speaking and listening activities. Staff are working together to check assessments of pupils' work and this has already resulted in teachers having more confidence in assessing accurately. Pupils are now involved in evaluating their learning, and marking has improved. As a result, pupils are better informed about what they need to do to improve, although it is too early for all of them to know precisely what their individual targets are. Teachers check pupils' progress regularly and adjust ability groupings accordingly, which makes it easier for them to plan for pupils of different abilities in English and mathematics. Much of the change is recent though, and is not yet seen in improved standards throughout the school.

Pupils' personal development is good. It is encouraged well by the range of experiences that promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including a good number of extra curricular clubs and strong links with the parish and wider community. Clear procedures for encouraging good behaviour are well understood by pupils and effective in encouraging safe and sensible conduct. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles at school and their participation in physical activities and clubs is particularly high. Successes in sporting competitions raise their self-esteem, as does the regular celebration of academic and personal achievements. Pupils develop tolerance and understanding of others' beliefs, because they learn about different world religions and the ethos of the school is inclusive. For instance, it recently held a themed day designed to celebrate aspects of Polish life, language and culture. Older pupils show responsible and caring attitudes when they look after younger ones, do various jobs around the school, grow vegetables, recycle, and raise funds for charities in the local community and abroad. The school council gives pupils a voice and enables them to contribute to making

decisions in school. Although pupils develop well their ability to work with others, their economic well-being is satisfactory because of the level of their basic skills.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership. Through accurate self-evaluation, she has quickly established the right priorities and led much recent development, including strengthening the procedures for encouraging good attendance. Attendance has increased from below average to broadly average. Challenging targets have been set for raising standards further and teaching staff are accountable for the progress that pupils make. Staff and pupils agree that the school has improved under her leadership. Pupils are delighted with the introduction of 'Golden Time', and many parents wrote to say that communication has improved. The headteacher has also shared responsibilities more widely amongst her staff and the current management structure is under review by staff and governors. She is well supported by the governors, who have many skills pertinent to governance of the school of this type. They also provide challenge, by questioning the wisdom of proposed developments. For example, recently, they have been decisive in changing the arrangements for pupils who are brought to school by car. This change has not been welcomed by all parents, but there is no doubt that the decision was taken with the best interests of pupils in mind and has helped to ensure their safety. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not meet all requirements. All the required checks are carried out on staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. However, the record of these checks does not show the date on which the identity of each person was checked.

Self-evaluation is satisfactory. The school accurately evaluates its effectiveness but the task is largely one carried out by the headteacher and certain senior staff. Although others play their part in monitoring provision, they do not use a wide enough range of measures of effectiveness. In English, mathematics and science data is analysed well enough. However, in other subjects assessment information is not collected and analysed in the same way. This reduces the school's ability to diagnose strengths and areas for development. As a result, its capacity for improvement is satisfactory rather than good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children soon settle into school life. The Foundation Stage team offers a toddler group once a week for children and parents in the local area which supports the transition into nursery. Initial assessment involves parents effectively, and is used satisfactorily to provide a suitable range of experiences across all areas of learning. Staff work well as a team to plan topics that link areas of learning together. Teaching is satisfactory. Enjoyable and appealing activities involve children well, such as finding 'hidden' shapes in the outdoor area. Staff check and record children's learning through regular observations of children engaged in activities they have chosen themselves. The school recognises that there is further work required to ensure that assessment of children's learning is always accurate. Children are well cared for and parents are happy with the provision that the school makes for their children. Recent analysis of assessment information shows that children make better progress in other areas than they do in communication, language and literacy or mathematical development, although progress is satisfactory overall. The use of data to evaluate the provision is at an early stage, as is formal action planning to secure improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing across the school, particularly for boys.

- Increase the proportion of pupils who reach the higher level (Level 5) in English and mathematics by Year 6.
- Ensure that all staff with leadership roles use assessment information to evaluate provision and use this to inform improvement planning.
- Ensure that the single central record of checks carried out on staff shows the date when each one's identity was checked.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

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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?	3
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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	2
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?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
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

28 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Derby, DE22 1AU

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school, especially to those who talked to me about school life. I enjoyed my day. I told the school council that I would write and tell you all what I think of the school, so that is what I am doing.

I was pleased to hear that you enjoy coming to school so much, and that you feel safe there. The staff take good care of you. Most of your parents are pleased with the school too. You are all developing well as young people. I found your behaviour to be good. You are sensible and know how to keep safe. You also get on well with one another and with the staff and this makes your school a pleasant place to be in. Your attendance has improved recently too. I was impressed with the number of ways that you contribute to school life, to the parish and the local community. You show that you care for others, especially by raising funds for those less fortunate than yourselves both in this country and abroad. Most of you choose to eat sensibly at school by selecting healthy options, and you take part in a lot of physical activities. The school council told me that Mrs Greaves has made some changes to the school that you all approve of, especially Golden Time. She is also helping the staff to make your lessons better. At the moment you are making satisfactory progress in English and mathematics and good progress in science. Mrs Greaves and the staff want you to make good progress in all subjects.

I agree with the staff that you all need to work together so that you get better at writing, especially the boys, who do not always do as well as the girls. I have asked teachers to help more of you reach Level 5 in English and mathematics by Year 6, as this will help you to get on even better at secondary school. The staff are going to measure your progress in all subjects so that they can work out what needs to be done to help you do as well as you possibly can. They are going to make sure that records of staff checks are kept correctly. You can help with improvements by attending regularly and working hard to reach your targets.

I wish you all the best in the future.

Mrs S Aldridge

Lead inspector