

St Martha's Catholic Primary School, King's Lynn

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121139
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	313893
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin L'Estrange
Headteacher	Mr Aidan McGovern
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Field Lane Gaywood King's Lynn Norfolk PE30 4AY
Telephone number	01553774829
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average and growing. It is popular and many pupils travel several miles to attend. Its ethos is based strongly on Catholic teachings and 80% of pupils are baptised Catholics. Most children start school with levels of knowledge and skills that are typical of children nationally. A lower proportion of pupils than in most schools require additional help with their learning but a higher proportion has a statement of special educational need. Fewer pupils than in most schools are eligible for free school meals. A larger percentage of pupils than is found in most schools are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 25% are in the early stages of speaking English. An above average percentage of pupils join or leave the school at other than expected times. The school has been awarded the Artsmark, the Bronze Eco award and it became a Norfolk Healthy School in 2007. It has Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Martha's is a good school, which celebrates the uniqueness and importance of every pupil within its very caring community. It nurtures them and strengthens their development as learners and young people, so that they achieve well and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. The Catholic ethos of the school, which is threaded through every aspect of daily school life and modelled very well by staff, results in pupils' outstanding spiritual development. It contributes strongly to the uplifting atmosphere. The vast majority of parents agree with this, describing the school as, 'fulfilling all expectations', and providing 'family love and care.'

The consistently good teaching at Key Stage 2 is the major factor in pupils' good progress by the end of Year 6. Progress in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory because teaching is generally not as effective. Standards show steady improvement as pupils move through the school and their progress accelerates so that by the end of Year 6, pupils reach and many exceed the expected standards in English, mathematics and science. Assessment practices, which ensure teachers are very clear about pupils' academic levels, have developed well since the last inspection and contribute to pupils' above average standards. Where lessons are less effective, particularly at Key Stage 1, it is due to teachers' planning not focusing carefully enough on matching pupils' work to their abilities. However, in many lessons, there is a real joy to learning because pupils are involved and challenged. Inconsistencies in teachers' marking result in pupils not always knowing how to improve their work.

School leaders provide clear direction, resulting in good leadership and management. High expectations, backed up by detailed planning over time, help the school to move forward and promote the all-round development of pupils. Subject leaders have become more effective due to their increasingly accurate understanding of pupils' strengths and areas for improvement.

Pupils enjoy school and grow into caring young citizens, taking on responsibilities enthusiastically. Their good behaviour, strong sense of right and wrong, good understanding of how to stay safe and regular opportunities to learn about our diverse society, contribute significantly to their good personal development. The curriculum, which is satisfactory, encourages pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles and strengthens their overall good personal development. It is a developing curriculum, which is encouraging creativity and greater enjoyment in learning. Music, a strength of the school, not only extends pupils' spiritual development, but allows them to discover and develop their musical talents in a great variety of ways. Partnerships with a local secondary school, and a varied programme of out-of-hours activities, particularly for sport, provide specialist teaching and broadens learning. Resources for children to use in the Foundation Stage are limited.

Care, guidance and support of pupils are satisfactory overall. Pastoral care is good, with help available to any pupils who are troubled. Academic guidance is developing, including pupils' ownership of their targets and the importance of them to their learning.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage leadership and management is satisfactory. Children get a positive start to their education because arrangements to help them settle into school are carefully thought out. Children respond positively, because teachers expect children to behave well and work hard. Consequently, children are happy and busy. They make satisfactory progress in their

learning, due to sound teaching. Most children achieve the standards expected for their age and a minority exceeds them in communication and language, and in personal development. Careful questioning by teachers in learning situations enables children to make progress. Staff provide a satisfactory variety of learning activities to stimulate children's imagination but resources are limited. The small outdoor area outside the classroom, which is an addition since the last inspection, does not enable children to experience the full range of learning opportunities. Its use is restricted in bad weather.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable standards to rise further, particularly at Key Stage 1, by ensuring that work matches pupils' needs more closely and that marking tells pupils how to improve their work.
- Improve resources for the Foundation Stage, in order to offer children a wider range of learning experiences.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities and groupings make good progress by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. The standards that they attain are above average in all three subjects. Challenging targets are met. Writing standards, a priority for the school, have improved this year and are reflected in higher standards in English. They were broadly in line with those nationally in 2007. At Key Stage 1, standards are average in Year 2, as they were in 2007. These standards reflect satisfactory progress during Years 1 and 2. Progress quickens through Key Stage 2 because teaching and learning are consistently good. Good achievement also results from improved tracking of pupils' progress through the school. This is enabling teachers to put in place prompt additional support for those who find learning difficult. Pupils who join the school at different times and those who are learning English as an additional language make good progress because they are well supported.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a good understanding of life in our multicultural society. Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding due to the school's strong Catholic character, which permeates every aspect of school life. Pupils are happy here. Their good social and moral development is seen in the kindness they show towards others and in their good behaviour in lessons and at break times. They use their good knowledge of healthy lifestyles to exercise regularly and eat healthily. Pupils mix well together in a safe environment. They say that incidents of bullying are rare and are met with a swift and effective response from staff.

By the end of Year 6, pupils have developed good literacy and numeracy skills and have a good understanding of teamwork, citizenship and leadership. Such good preparation for secondary education is partly due to the numerous opportunities they have to help run the school, right from their first day. Most pupils attend school very regularly and attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy learning and are keen to do well. This is evident in their positive attitudes. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and set the scene well for learning. Pupils are always clear about the purpose of lessons so they know exactly what they have to do. In the best lessons, particularly in Key Stage 2, there are lots of opportunities for problem solving and for learning through computer based teaching. The pace of learning is brisk and teaching is lively. However, teaching is sometimes less effective, particularly at Key Stage 1, because there is not enough challenge for pupils to make progress as quickly as they could. Nevertheless, learning is consolidated as pupils move through Key Stage 2, leading to their good progress by the end of Year 6.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is evolving to make it more creative and engaging for pupils. For example, teachers of older pupils successfully use themes to link subjects together and plans have been set in motion to introduce a foreign language into the curriculum. Multicultural education has been effective in improving pupils' cultural development. Provision for pupils who find learning difficult allows them to make good progress. That for pupils with particular gifts and talents is at an early stage of development. Pupils enjoy the range of clubs and school visits extend their learning. The good music curriculum enables all pupils to develop musical skills and allows more able musicians to develop their talents and perform in the choir and various instrumental groups. The recent introduction of interactive whiteboards has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Good pastoral care for pupils stems from the school's strong principles, central to which are secure relationships between pupils and staff. Support for pupils who find learning difficult is improving due to good leadership and teaching assistants work effectively to support learners in lessons. Systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are more sophisticated and now offer good quality information. Pupils know their literacy and numeracy targets but they are not yet a main focus in lessons. Teachers' marking is frequent but does not regularly offer advice on how pupils can improve their work. The school has satisfactory procedures for ensuring pupils are protected and safe in school, and works well with outside agencies to ensure that they have appropriate support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership provides effective direction for the work of the school. Plans are based on a good understanding of the school's strengths and what is needed to improve its performance. Governors contribute effectively to the school's shared vision. There is good teamwork throughout the school. This is ensuring not only the pupils' good progress but also their good

all-round preparation for adulthood. Key subject leaders are becoming increasingly effective in driving improvement. Due to regular assessments, leaders in most subjects now have a greater knowledge of the levels at which pupils work. The good leadership and management at all levels lead to the school's good capacity to improve.

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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	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	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?	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?	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

10 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Martha's Catholic Primary School, Kings Lynn, PE30 4AY

I am writing to thank you for making our recent visit to your school an enjoyable one. We were pleased to be able to see lots of activities that are part of everyday school life for you. The gardening club looked good fun! We send special thanks to those of you who gave up part of your lunch break to share your thoughts about your school with us. This letter tells you about the judgements that we have made.

Your school is a good school. You enjoy being there and you show this in your behaviour, which is sensible and kind. We enjoyed watching you learning and playing. Those of you in the Reception class, though, need to have more equipment to help you to learn in lots of different ways. Your outdoor area does not have a cover, so that you can play and learn there whatever the weather.

You reach above average standards by the time you leave St Martha's. This is because a lot of teaching is good and helps you to make good progress. Sometimes, and more often in Years 1 and 2, your work is a little too easy or too difficult. Also, teachers mark your work often but they do not always tell you how to improve it. We were impressed by the many opportunities you are given to develop as good young citizens, such as through the school council and taking on responsibilities in the school. You like lessons, especially those where you can learn for yourselves and solve problems. You also like out-of-hours clubs and visits because you can learn new skills.

You can help the staff to improve the school further by continuing to work hard and continuing to behave well. I send you our best wishes for the future.

Mrs Lynne Blakelock

Lead inspector