

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 121639 |
| Local Authority | North Yorkshire |
| Inspection number | 314065 |
| Inspection dates | 4–5 February 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Don Mason |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 151 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Helen Utting |
| Headteacher | Mr Nigel Evans |
| Date of previous school inspection | 8 September 2003 |
| School address | Baffam Lane Selby North Yorkshire YO8 9AX |
| Telephone number | 01757 706616 |
| Fax number | 01757 290793 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most pupils are from White British families. They come from a wide catchment area and a range of social and economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average overall, but varies from year to year. After a long period of ill health, the headteacher is on sick leave. The assistant headteacher has been managing the school in his absence since the end of November 2007. A new chair of governors was elected in September 2007. The school received the Active Sportsmark in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. This is being successfully maintained by the acting headteacher during this unsettled period in the school's history. She and the new chair of governors have brought stability to the situation and are beginning to move the school forward again. Most parents are supportive of the school, often strongly so, making such comments as, 'The school has a warm and friendly atmosphere with a strong sense of community.' However, about a third of parents, who responded to the parent questionnaire have some concerns, particularly about the way the school takes their views into account. Senior staff have not yet taken sufficient action to allay their fears. The pupils, whose personal development is satisfactory overall, speak warmly about their teachers and enjoy coming to school.

Children's attainment on entry to school varies considerably from year to year, from average to well above average. Consequently, standards at the end of Year 6 differ year by year. Overall, children's attainment on entry to school is above national expectations. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school and standards, at the end of Year 6, are above average in English and mathematics, and average in science. This represents satisfactory achievement. In recent years some pupils have not made as much progress as they should. One reason for this is that the procedures to check pupils' progress were not effective in identifying those pupils who needed additional support. These assessment arrangements have been much improved recently and teachers can now identify these pupils quickly and provide them with the extra support they require. Currently, a significant number of pupils in Key Stage 2 are receiving extra support in reading and mathematics, and making better progress as a result. The school accepts that its assessment procedures need further refinement to ensure that the information is always reliable giving an accurate picture of the attainment of all pupils.

The quality of teaching and the curriculum provided are satisfactory overall. The pupils are keen and enthusiastic when they are working on their practical activities in mathematics and science, but much of the work in English and mathematics is less appealing and mainly involves pupils listening to the teacher for quite a long time and then working on their own. However, pupils make satisfactory progress overall because the work they are set is usually appropriate to their needs. Whilst the behaviour of most pupils is good, a minority sometimes disturb the learning of others, and this is not always dealt with firmly enough. Pupils feel safe and secure because of the good relationships which exist between staff and pupils. The academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory. Pupil targets have been introduced in English and mathematics but, as yet, these are having limited impact on pupils' understanding of their achievements and what they need to do to improve further. The best advice provided for pupils occurs in writing, where teachers are using their improved assessment information to give pupils clear advice about what they have achieved and what their next steps should be. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the community through the school council, fundraising activities and taking on duties in school.

Senior staff have taken appropriate action to deal with the underachievement which they successfully identified. However, the school's development plan and self-evaluation procedures are not yet rigorous enough to enable the school to accurately assess the impact of their actions on pupils' progress. Subject leaders are working hard to improve achievement but their efforts are not drawn together well enough into a clear, effective plan for school improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

As a result of good induction procedures, children settle in quickly and make satisfactory progress in their learning, particularly in their language skills and personal development. In just one term the new teacher of the Foundation Stage has built positive links with parents who are appreciative of her efforts, making such comments as, 'I am thoroughly impressed with the progress my child has made both socially and academically since September.' However, the teacher's efforts are constrained by the fact that she has no adult support. Provision is adequate because the group is small and the twelve pupils are of similar ability, well above national expectations, enabling the teacher to teach the group as a whole. She does this well. The children clearly enjoy their time at school and are highly motivated when working with the teacher. The teacher's planning for all areas, including good work on phonics, is detailed. She checks pupils' progress thoroughly and usually provides them with work which matches their needs well. The outdoor provision has improved since the last inspection but still does not fully meet the requirements of space and variety of environment which is necessary for children of this age. Furthermore, its use is limited by the lack of additional support for the teacher, and therefore, children cannot make as much use of the area as she would like.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide a clear plan for improvement, which prioritises measurable gains in pupils' achievement.
- Make the school's self-evaluation more rigorous, ensuring that action taken to improve pupils' achievement can be measured.
- Refine the systems for checking pupils' progress to ensure that the information provides an accurate picture of the attainment of all pupils.
- Building on the good practice seen in writing, improve the guidance given to pupils about their achievements and what they need to do in order to improve.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards at the end of Year 6 vary, from year to year, because of the difference in attainment on entry and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in each cohort. Overall, pupils enter Year 1 at or above the levels expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress through the school and standards, at the end of Year 6, are above average in English and mathematics. Achievement is satisfactory. There are early indications, from the improved assessment arrangements, that the rate of progress is increasing, particularly in writing. This is particularly true of pupils in the intervention groups, where well focused support from the learning support teacher and teaching assistants is helping a significant number of pupils to catch up with their peers. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make at least as much progress as other pupils because of the effective support they receive from conscientious teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Most pupils have a well developed sense of right and wrong and take good care of each other in and around the school. Their understanding of the cultural diversity of the society in which they live is not so well developed. Most pupils behave well, although a minority display a lack of self-discipline which sometimes disturbs the concentration of other pupils and the focus of teachers when they are talking to the class. Pupils feel that their views are listened to and are confident that they can express any worries in circle time, through the school council and through the 'worry box'. Pupils learn to work safely and gain a good understanding of the importance of diet and exercise through an effective programme of personal, social and health education and a good range of sporting opportunities. They make satisfactory progress in the basic skills and information and communication technology (ICT) and have some opportunities to work together, especially in practical activities in mathematics and science.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The teaching of English and mathematics is often formal and does not always engage pupils sufficiently. Teachers sometimes talk to the whole class for too long not making enough allowance for the prior knowledge of pupils in the mixed aged classes. Consequently, the younger pupils in the class sometimes have difficulty keeping up. However, the work provided usually enables pupils of all abilities to make satisfactory progress. The pace of learning, the effectiveness of questioning, and the use of interactive whiteboards to motivate the pupils are good in some lessons. However, the quality of teaching overall, including the pupils' understanding of the purpose of what they are doing, is inconsistent. Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons and generally they behave well and are cooperative in class. The lack of self-discipline of a minority is sometimes exacerbated when teachers talk to the whole class for too long, or pupils are not engaged in their learning.

Teachers have been working hard to improve achievement in mathematics and science by providing more practical activities and this is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress as well as their motivation and enjoyment. Progress in writing is more secure because the pupils are given clear advice about their achievements and what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 is mostly based on national guidance and provides a satisfactory range of experiences for pupils. As well as making satisfactory progress in the basic skills, pupils acquire a good understanding of the requirements of a healthy lifestyle. Teachers are beginning to provide activities which make links between subjects making them more meaningful and interesting for the pupils. A 'Victorian' day and a visit to the railway museum related to work on bridges are examples of the efforts staff are making to enrich the curriculum. A good range of extra-curricular activities, including science, chess and gardening clubs enhance pupils' enjoyment and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

In this small school community adults know the pupils very well and as a result, they feel happy and safe and most develop high levels of self-confidence. Pupils talk of being part of, 'one big happy family'. Policies to ensure pupils' safety and well-being are securely in place. However, the school has not been firm enough in its efforts to ensure that the school car park is not used as a dropping off and picking up point or a short cut, a fact commented on by pupils.

A number of measures have been introduced to improve the guidance offered to pupils about their achievements and what they have to do to improve their work but these are at an early stage of development. For example, the information gained from the new assessment books for individual pupils in writing and mathematics is giving teachers a better understanding of their pupils' achievements. This, in turn, is helping teachers to give pupils better advice about how to improve their work, especially in writing. The quality of marking is inconsistent. It tends to praise the pupils' efforts rather than informing them of what they need to do next to improve. The best marking is to be found in writing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher is managing the school successfully and, with the help of the new chair of governors, the local authority and good links with local schools and other agencies, is refocusing the school on the need to move forward at this difficult time. As yet, the school development plan and procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of the school are not rigorous enough. Individual subject leaders provide good support for their colleagues but their efforts are not coordinated well enough to achieve the maximum impact on pupils' personal development and achievement. The improved assessment arrangements are enabling teachers to identify pupils in danger of falling behind. The support these pupils are receiving from experienced teaching assistants is enabling them to make more rapid progress and to catch up with their peers. The use of this information is resulting in pupils beginning to have more success in reaching their challenging targets. However, not all the information is reliable or detailed enough, and so teachers do not always have a completely accurate picture of pupils' attainment and what their next target should be.

Governors provide strong day-to-day support for the school. The new chair of governors has high expectations of what the school can achieve. She welcomes the more detailed information which the school is providing and this is helping the governing body to become more proactive in helping the school to move forward. The improved assessment arrangements and the early signs of accelerating progress, particularly in writing, provide evidence of the school's satisfactory capacity for further improvement

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| 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

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |

The quality of provision

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|--|---|
| 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

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| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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, Selby, YO8 9AX

My colleague and I really enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for being so helpful and friendly. We particularly enjoyed visiting your classrooms, seeing the work you were doing and talking to you about your school. Your school provides you with a satisfactory education.

Things we found out about your school

- You make satisfactory progress in your work and standards at the end of Year 6 are usually above average in English and mathematics.
- Your attendance is satisfactory. Most of you behave well. Generally you enjoy your lessons and get on very well with your teachers.
- Recently, you have started to make better progress in your work, particularly in writing because your teachers are checking your progress more carefully and giving you more help when you need it.
- You appreciate the efforts the teachers are making to make lessons more interesting by giving you more practical activities, especially in science and mathematics.
- Your acting headteacher is looking after the school well while the headteacher is away.

What I have asked your school to do now

- Produce a more detailed plan of the improvements they want, so that everyone can be sure that any changes really do help you to make even better progress in your learning and personal development.
- Check your progress even more thoroughly so they can make sure that you all make as much progress as possible in English, mathematics and science.
- Tell you more about how you can do better in your work, especially in mathematics and science, building on the good advice you often receive about your writing.

You can help your teachers by always setting a good example to others in your attendance, hard work and good behaviour. I wish you all the very best of luck for the future.