

# St Mark's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124786
<b>Local Authority</b>	SUFFOLK LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	315058
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Messer

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	213
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Paul McGrath
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Theresa Barker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 May 2003
<b>School address</b>	Stone Lodge Lane West Ipswich Suffolk IP2 9HN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01473 601748
<b>Fax number</b>	01473 684588

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This school is smaller than average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and nearly a quarter are from minority ethnic families. Several pupils speak English as an additional language and a small number is at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average. Children's attainment on entry to the school is usually below that typical for this age, especially in communication, language and literacy, and in some years it is exceptionally low. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award and the Active Mark.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school because pupils make outstanding progress, from below average starting points, and attain standards that are above average by Year 6. Pupils' outstanding personal development is a key factor in promoting their exceptional achievement. From their earliest days in school children start to develop as confident learners who are given excellent guidance about how to reach the next stages in their learning. Teaching is outstanding. Teachers maintain high expectations of pupils' performance and concentrate on making sure that all groups of pupils, including faster learners and those who find learning difficult, are encouraged to do their very best. The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. She has established a strong team of leaders who are all committed to building an exciting curriculum and helping all pupils to attain the highest possible standards. Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning. Their behaviour is excellent.

Parents are delighted with the education provided for their children. One comment was typical, 'An excellent school - my children feel at home - all their needs are met, emotionally and educationally.' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They make an excellent contribution to the school community. Family groups across the age range have been formed and through these older pupils support and guide younger ones exceptionally well.

Pupils develop high levels of maturity because they are entrusted with important responsibilities for helping to manage the day-to-day running of the school. For example, pupils themselves identified the library as an area that was insufficiently inviting. Staff then worked with pupils to revamp provision and create a library that stimulated reading and research. Pupils develop a good range of key skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). They all have opportunities to learn musical instruments and some stunning work is produced in art and design. Pupils are prepared well for the next phase of their education.

Pupils receive outstanding care, guidance and support. They develop an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. They report that they feel safe and secure in school. Excellent learning journals help pupils to gain a clear understanding of what they need to do to reach the next stages in their learning in literacy and numeracy.

Parents and governors report that the school's outstanding leadership and management have been key factors in the way that the school has been transformed in recent years. Leaders are highly effective and are passionate about improving standards further. Self-evaluation is accurate and staff and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths, particularly in relation to improvements over the last two years. These have included establishing robust systems and procedures for assessing and tracking individual pupils' progress. However, assessment data is not yet analysed rigorously enough to set appropriately challenging targets in literacy and numeracy for each year group each school year.

A calm, purposeful climate for learning is a key feature of the ethos that has been established. The continuing trend of improvement demonstrates that the school has exceptionally good capacity for further development. The school is poised to go from strength to strength.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Close links with parents, including home visits by school staff before children start school, help children to get off to a flying start in the Reception class. They rapidly learn about classroom routines and that they are responsible for helping to manage the classroom environment. For example, children use egg timers well to help them to understand when it is time to let somebody else have a turn at using the interactive white board. There is a strong emphasis on teaching children the links between letters and the sounds they make and on developing their understanding of a wide range of everyday words, because these aspects of their development have been clearly identified as key weaknesses. However, dialogue between adults and children to extend their vocabulary is not always used intensively enough. Visits, such as a recent one to the vets, are used skilfully as the basis for many purposeful activities. Teaching is good and staff work closely together as a team to promote effective learning. The outside area is well designed and is used well as a learning resource.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Refine the analysis of assessment data to set challenging targets for the amount of progress that year groups are expected to make each year in literacy and numeracy.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 1

All groups of pupils, including the least and most able, make good progress and for many it is outstanding. Children settle happily in the Reception class and achieve well in all areas of learning. Children reach average standards by the end of the Reception year in most areas of learning but many are still catching up in their early literacy skills. Good progress is maintained in Years 1 and 2 so that by Year 2 standards are generally average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards continue to improve over the course of Key Stage 2 and by Year 6 they are above average. Overall therefore pupils' performance improves from below average attainment on entry to above average by the time they leave the school and this represents outstanding achievement. There are clear signs that standards are improving. The current Year 2 pupils are on course to attain standards that are above average by the end of the year.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils are highly articulate, courteous and display excellent social skills. Their views are listened to keenly and are highly valued. As one pupil affirmed, 'We have a voice'. They care for each other extremely well and are sensitive to the needs of others. The Christian ethos of the school supports their spiritual development particularly well and pupils engage reflectively in mass and in daily prayers.

Pupils' maturity and sense of responsibility are extraordinary. They have good opportunities to develop economic awareness through mini-enterprise schemes. One pupil plans to organise 'keep fit' sessions across the school. 'Eco Warriors' are responsible for promoting recycling and conserving energy and others help to check on health and safety. The attendance for the majority of pupils is good. Holidays taken during term time do have a negative impact on the school's overall attendance although the school works hard, and largely successfully, at combating this. Pupils contribute wholeheartedly to charitable fund-raising events to support

the wider community. Exceptionally good international links with, for example, schools in The Congo, Gambia and Italy, help to foster an understanding of different cultures. Visitors from minority ethnic groups provide exceptionally good support for pupils' understanding of our multicultural society by explaining different religious and cultural traditions.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teachers create bright, inviting classrooms that stimulate pupils' interest. Lesson planning is meticulous and describes clearly how activities will be modified to match the learning needs of all groups. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Teachers constantly strive to raise standards. Technology, including interactive white boards, is often used exceptionally well. In one literacy lesson in Year 6, for example, pupils watched a video clip of an advertising jingle. They analysed the key elements of persuasive communication and then produced their own advertising films with accompanying musical compositions. They thoroughly enjoyed this highly effective learning experience. Skilled classroom assistants make a strong contribution to the quality of teaching and learning, especially for those who find learning difficult.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The rich curriculum includes a wealth of activities that capture pupils' interests and extend their learning exceptionally well. The curriculum is relevant to pupils' needs. There is a strong emphasis on teaching key skills in literacy and numeracy. Whole school topics are devised which capture pupils' interests and promote an enthusiasm for learning. The curriculum promotes a well-rounded education. Music and the performing arts are well represented. Especially good work is produced in art and design and in ICT. Sports and games feature strongly. A good range of visits and visitors enhance learning well. Exceptionally good attention is paid to promoting an understanding of different cultures and beliefs.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

Outstanding care, guidance and support make a significant contribution to pupils' personal well-being. As one pupil confidently explained, the school is a 'family'. The school has effective policies and procedures to safeguard pupils' welfare. Parents feel the school is very supportive and have confidence in staff. The school provides good support to different groups such as pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, those from minority ethnic groups, pupils who join the school other than at the usual entry points, and those who speak first languages other than English. The quality of individual feedback pupils receive to enable them to identify the next steps in their learning is excellent.

## **Leadership and management**

#### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher provides strong leadership and has encouraged the school community to have high aspirations. She is supported well by other leaders and governors who all share a

commitment to maintaining outstanding provision. The school development plan has an appropriate focus on priorities for improvement. Staff and governors study statistics on the school's performance to gain an understanding of how well the school is doing. Nonetheless, data is not used with enough precision to set challenging targets for the progress that each year group is expected to make.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<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>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

22 February 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St Mark's Catholic Primary School, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP2 9HN

What a great school! We thoroughly enjoyed our short time with you. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful.

There are lots of good things that make your school so lovely. Here are some of them.

- All the staff work hard to make sure that each and every one of you gets the best education possible.
- You are extremely pleasant and kind to each other and this makes the school a happy place to be.
- You are keen to learn and make exceptionally good progress so that the standards you attain are rising.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to reach the next stages of your learning in literacy and numeracy and this helps you to move on rapidly in your learning.
- You sing brilliantly and the school anthem that you sang in mass was truly beautiful.
- You know how to stay safe and look after yourselves.
- You know all about leading healthy lifestyles.
- You are sensible and take your responsibilities seriously.
- Your teachers work hard on planning interesting lessons and are always keen to find new ways to make your learning even more successful.
- Your parents support the school wholeheartedly and are keen for you to do well.

I have asked the teachers to measure your progress and the standards you attain even more accurately so that challenging targets can be set for each year group to aim at.

I think that there are exciting times ahead. I wish you every success in the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your learning.

All best wishes

John Messer

Lead inspector