

The Marist Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125213
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315195
Inspection date	2 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Christopher Gray

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	311
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Bernie Newton
Headteacher	Mrs Mary Rolfe
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2003
School address	Old Woking Road West Byfleet KT14 6HS
Telephone number	01932 344 477
Fax number	01932 352 642

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' progress and personal development, teaching and leadership and management. He gathered evidence from records of pupils' attainment, samples of pupils' past work, observations of lessons and round the school, meetings with staff, governors and pupils and an analysis of the 79 responses to the parents' questionnaire. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but inspectors found no evidence 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 this report.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. Many pupils come from socially advantaged backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is average though very few are at the early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below what is normally found but the percentage of those with statements is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. The headteacher gives excellent leadership and inspires her staff to share her commitment to the pupils. Many parents wrote to comment positively on this. As one put it, 'The school is extremely well managed, with dedicated and enthusiastic staff.' The school gives its pupils excellent pastoral care and they respond with outstanding behaviour. They clearly love school and all that it has to offer. They have a very well developed and mature moral sense. For example, a group of pupils debated whether it was more important to learn to read or to be a nice person. One said, 'If you grow up being mean and nasty, you'd find it hard to break the habit.' Another observed, 'You could learn to read later.' Pupils understand why religious belief is important in people's lives and appreciate that no one has all the right answers.

Pupils achieve well across the school. Standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average by Year 6. Pupils make very good progress in reading and writing. In mathematics, they make good progress, but fewer pupils reach the higher levels than in English. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their classmates because very good support is given to them. A small number of parents would appreciate more information on their progress, however. An outstanding feature of the support given to pupils is the large number of 'booster' groups for any pupils who have particular difficulties in literacy or numeracy.

Since the last inspection, the school has moved into a completely new building, 'well equipped with many facilities', in the words of one parent. Planning for this has been a huge task which has been carried out effectively. There are still settling-in problems, such as the incomplete school field, commented on by a few parents and pupils. The school is doing its best to overcome this restriction to its sports teaching. Development planning during the period of removal and resettling has been effective and shows the school's good capacity to improve further. However the number of targets in the plan is very large and too few of the tests for success are measurable. The school is in the process of agreeing a new development plan, in which governors are set to play a fuller role than in previous years.

The good teaching and curriculum enthuse pupils and help them to enjoy their learning. Year 6 pupils were preparing to write in the genre of detective stories, having studied a Sherlock Holmes tale. In pairs they role-played a detective interviewing a suspect in order to give them ideas for the sort of dialogue needed in such a story. Teachers match activities well to pupils' needs, especially in literacy lessons. In an English lesson for Years 1 and 2 pupils, higher attainers were asked to retell the story of the Gingerbread Man but with him as the villain and other characters as the heroes. In mathematics, teachers frequently give different work to slower learners. However, higher attaining pupils often receive the same work as average attaining pupils but just more of it.

Pupils' overall personal development is good. They know how to keep healthy, but are not so keen on healthy options at lunchtime. Pupils feel very safe in school, reporting that bullying is very rare and always well dealt with. Parents share this view and also commented that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their learning. They have good literacy and numeracy skills and use information and communication technology (ICT) in a variety of lessons. The school is in the process of reviewing its ICT curriculum to extend these opportunities.

'There is a great community feeling within the school' and 'The school is an example of a secure and caring environment in which children thrive' are just two of the many very positive comments

which parents submitted during the inspection. The school's caring, Catholic ethos is evident to any visitor and is one of the reasons why the school is valued by parents and pupils alike. Procedures to ensure that pupils are safe are rigorous and exceed requirements - the inspector even had to show his passport as a proof of identity. Academic guidance is good, especially in literacy and for slower learners in mathematics.

A mark of the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation is that the judgements contained in this report and in the school's own appraisal are the same. Middle managers and governors are involved in this evaluation process and monitor the school's development well. A number of recent staff changes have meant that some coordinators are new to their jobs, but senior managers are providing effective support, as they do for the school's newly qualified teachers. Another parental comment sums up the school's work: 'A good balance, building confidence and maintaining discipline.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's skills when they start in Reception are in line with the county average and a little above the national average. They settle quickly to school because one of their strongest areas is in supporting their personal development. They have very good attitudes to learning and they work and play well with others. The curriculum is geared each year to meeting the differing needs of each class; for example, greater emphasis was placed recently on knowledge and understanding of the world, because this was found to be the weakest area in a group of children who started school. Assessment is used constantly and effectively so that children achieve well. By the time they enter Year 1 their attainment is above the county average and very few do not reach at least the national average.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable more pupils to reach the higher levels in mathematics by giving them greater challenge in their daily work.
- Include fewer priorities in the school development plan, with criteria for success that can be easily measured.

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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	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	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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Marist Catholic Primary School, West Byfleet, KT14 6HS

I enjoyed my visit to your school recently. I hope those of you who were out of school enjoyed your time at the British Museum, despite the breakdown of one of the coaches. It was good to speak to so many of you and this helped me in the work I had to do. I found it especially useful meeting the two groups of pupils, all of whom had many interesting things to tell me about the school and about their own views.

You go to a good school, of which you and your parents are rightly proud. Your behaviour is extremely good in lessons, round the school and when practising sports in the playground. All the adults do their best to keep you safe and happy. Every one of those I asked said there were lots of people (both children and adults) to help if things do not go quite right. The school council does a valuable job, 'to solve problems', as one member told me. You reach good standards in English, mathematics and science by the time you leave.

The teaching is good and enables you to learn well. You enjoy using the interactive whiteboards, as I saw in the Reception classes. Teachers give you interesting work and often this is made to fit well with the differing rates at which you learn. I saw an example of this in the different activities that Year 1 pupils were doing about the Gingerbread Man. Sometimes in mathematics, though, those of you who learn fastest carry out too many examples of the same type of work, so I have asked teachers to give you harder work on some occasions.

Your headteacher is extremely good at her job. She and all staff and governors worked very hard to settle you into your new buildings. Like most schools, they plan for future changes very carefully. This is called a 'school development plan', and it contains targets, as your English and mathematics books do. Perhaps you might be asked to contribute to it. I have asked the school to reduce the number of targets they set themselves and to come up with tests they can carry out to show that the targets have been achieved - as they do with you every half-term.

I hope you continue to enjoy your time at The Marist Catholic Primary School.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Gray

Lead Inspector