

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103085
Local Authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	323751
Inspection date	5 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	218
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Philip Roe and Mrs Katherine Ward
Headteacher	Miss Philomena Egan
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Station Road Chingford London E4 7BJ
Telephone number	020 8529 4723
Fax number	020 8529 1012

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the impact of measures to raise standards in Years 1 and 2
- the contribution of teaching to high standards by the end of Year 6.

The inspectors gathered evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, and parents' questionnaires. Discussions with staff, governors and pupils also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the 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

This popular, average sized school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the Reception class. Few pupils are entitled to free school meals. Over a quarter of the pupils come from a variety of minority ethnic groups. A very small proportion speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, and they have a variety of different needs. The school has the Healthy School and Activemark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Mary's is an outstanding school. Pupils make excellent progress to reach consistently exceptionally high standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Outstanding teaching challenges pupils to perform to the best of their ability, while a vibrant and exciting curriculum ensures that they thoroughly enjoy school. As a parent commented, speaking for many, 'The children's behaviour and attitudes are exemplary, and the learning environment is constructive and fun.' The school is heavily oversubscribed, as parents value not only its academic achievements, but also its strong commitment to Catholic values. The school's caring and inclusive ethos is based on firmly held Christian principles that underpin all its work. Based on its excellent track record, it has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Children enter the Reception class with a wide range of skills and abilities that are typical of those usually expected, and achieve well to the end of Year 2 from their starting points. Over the last couple of years there has been a dip in attainment at the end of Year 2, mainly because of differences between cohorts. However, the school has addressed this very well, by, for example, introducing a systematic approach to teaching reading and writing skills, and providing more opportunities for extended writing. In consequence, standards in the present Year 2 are already above average. Progress accelerates throughout Key Stage 2, so that by the end of Year 6 standards have been exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science for the past five years, with all pupils attaining the expected Level 4, and very large numbers of pupils attaining the higher Level 5. This is due to extremely effective teaching of core skills, and to consistency in the high quality of teaching from year to year, so that no groups of pupils slow down in the pace of their achievement.

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Pupils show a high level of respect for one another and for their school, which is evidenced by the pride with which they all wear the distinctive uniform. They go about their business in a calm and orderly fashion, displaying exemplary attitudes to learning, and are very keen to participate fully in lessons. Attendance is exceptionally high because pupils love coming to school, and because school leaders give it great priority. Holidays in term time are actively discouraged. Pupils have an extremely good understanding of how to make healthy choices, which includes an awareness of the food groups that combine to make a balanced diet. They take plenty of exercise, as demonstrated in the award of the Activemark. Pupils say they feel safe at school and free from bullying or harassment. Behaviour is impeccable. All pupils in Year 6 are able to take cycling proficiency lessons, so that they develop a very good appreciation of road safety. Pupils make a valuable contribution to the school community through the school council, and as prefects and play leaders. They also support their local community particularly well, with strong links to the parish church. Pupils select charities to support, and organise events to raise money for them. They are exceptionally well prepared for secondary school, leaving with excellent basic skills and as confident individuals who have a love of learning.

One pupil said, 'You learn something every day.' Teaching is probing and conducted at a brisk pace, with a high level of challenge for all pupils, whatever their abilities. There are excellent relationships between pupils and staff, so that pupils are motivated to learn. Outstanding subject knowledge means that teachers are very clear about the aims of their lessons, and use questioning highly effectively to move learning forwards. In the best lessons, pupils are totally absorbed in their work, as when Year 4 pupils were making animations in the computer suite linked to their topic on the Second World War. They had made their own backdrops, such as

St Paul's Cathedral, and were manipulating puppets to build up a sequence of action. Pupils were delighted with the results, and very keen to talk about they were doing. The outstanding curriculum is relevant to all pupils, including those with a range of learning difficulties. Pupils with statements of educational needs are particularly well included in lessons, and receive excellent support from teaching assistants. This enables them to make outstanding progress, often reaching nationally expected levels of attainment. Subject specialists in Spanish, music and physical education work alongside teachers to help pupils make rapid gains in these subjects. There is excellent enrichment of the curriculum through a wide range of educational visits, visitors and clubs. Pupils have visited the Imperial War Museum, the Greenwich Observatory and Verulamium (in St Albans) in recent times. They also benefit from residential visits that boost their confidence. There have been visits from theatre companies such as The Young Shakespeare Company, and workshops on the Egyptians. Clubs include football, music and dance. Some of the school's technology hardware is getting old, and plans are in hand to replace and renew it.

The care, guidance and support that pupils receive are outstanding. There are excellent links with outside agencies to support vulnerable pupils and those facing difficulties. All safeguarding measures are in place. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very strong, enabling them to achieve extremely well. Staff know the pupils very well as individuals, track their progress closely, and give them every support. Marking is consistently effective and shows pupils how to improve. They all know their literacy targets very well, although some of the younger pupils were not quite so sure about targets for numeracy. Parents are unanimous in their belief that their children are safe and well cared for. One commented, 'My children are learning and developing in a very caring school environment.'

Dynamic and extremely effective leadership from the headteacher, who is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher and the senior teacher, helps to drive forward improvement. As a result of thorough monitoring, leaders know the school's strengths and areas to develop particularly well, and this is reflected in concise and well-written strategic plans. The impact of leadership and management, both on academic standards, and on the excellent personal development and well-being of pupils, is outstanding. A system of modelling good practice and coaching for staff helps to sustain very high levels of performance, with all teaching staff having opportunities to work in more than one key stage. The school is particularly successful at understanding and working with its local community, and giving pupils opportunities to know and appreciate the wide variety of cultures existing in the United Kingdom. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to experience the global perspective by making links with schools in other countries, or studying in depth aspects of international interest. The system of joint chairs for the governing body works extremely effectively, and excellent use is made of the wide range of expertise that governors bring to the school's work. A detailed work plan for the year ensures that governors fulfil all their responsibilities and monitor the work of the school closely. They provide an outstanding balance of support and challenge.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Reception class, joining the school from many different pre-school settings, and having a wide range of skills and abilities. Although the classroom is small, good use is made of the space to give children opportunities to develop their independence through selecting resources. Detailed planning ensures that the six areas of learning are covered effectively inside, although this is less well developed in the use of the outside area. Most of

the work outside concentrates on children's physical and creative development and their knowledge and understanding of the world, rather than on all six areas. Children have direct access to the outside from the classroom, but this is at specified times and they are not able to come and go freely. There is good and sometimes outstanding teaching, with early literacy and numeracy skills taught particularly well. A lively and stimulating curriculum ensures that children receive a wide variety of interesting experiences in the classroom. Children make very rapid progress in their personal development, as routines are established early on and the classroom is organised very well. Behaviour is excellent. The children and adults have very positive attitudes towards each other. From typically expected starting points, children make good progress, so that they meet and often exceed the goals expected of them by the time they enter Year 1. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well, with an effective induction system for new children, and very strong links with parents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the use of the outside area in the Early Years Foundation Stage to cover all six areas of learning and provide freer access for children.
- Develop links that promote the pupils' understanding of the global community.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, London, E4 7BJ

We enjoyed meeting you when we visited your school. Thank you for making us welcome. Yours is an outstanding school with many areas of strength. Here are some of them.

- You reach exceptionally high standards by the time you leave Year 6.
- You all make extremely good progress in your work.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and stay safe.
- Your behaviour is impeccable, and you support one another very well.
- The teaching is outstanding and really makes you think.
- There are lots of visits, visitors and clubs for you to enjoy.
- The school cares for you particularly well, especially if you are having difficulties.
- The school has extremely effective leadership and management.

Children in the Reception class get off to a good start, with lots of interesting things to do inside. We have asked your school to make sure that there is a good variety of activities for you to enjoy outside as well. You have a very good understanding of your own community, and know all about the different cultures represented locally. We have asked your teachers to think about helping you to understand how people live, and the challenges that they face in other parts of the world. Perhaps you could write to children in a school in a different country, to find out what their experiences are like.

Thank you once again for your assistance. Our very best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Mr N Butt

Lead Inspector