

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103438
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	323826
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 July 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Wallis-Maclean

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.

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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 (total)	209
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jane Parkes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helena Cusack
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 May 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Vivian Road Harborne Birmingham B17 0DN
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 464 2141
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 464 8312

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 July 2009
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This slightly below average sized primary school serves the parish of St Mary's in Harborne, Birmingham. It is situated in an area with positive socio-economic indicators. The majority of pupils are Catholic and most are from White British backgrounds. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Reception class. There are a growing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average.

## 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. It provides an excellent education that meets pupils' learning and individual needs extremely well. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher all staff are committed to the task of giving the pupils the best start to their education. Pupils greatly enjoy coming to school, they feel safe and secure and they have a very good understanding of what it means to have a healthy lifestyle and the benefits of taking on responsibilities, such as becoming 'reading buddies' or managers of the healthy 'tuck shop'. Pupils take an immense pride in their school: one pupil said, 'I love my school, it is fun and safe and we learn such a lot'. This is reflected in the views of the majority of parents: 'This is a truly wonderful school. My child leaves not only as a determined hard worker who strives hard to meet the targets set, but also as a compassionate human being who cares deeply for her friends, teachers and the school community. What better start in life could a parent wish for' and 'The staff at St Mary's provide a lovely, warm, caring and yet stimulating environment in which the children are able to flourish' are typical comments.

Children start school in line with national expectations and go on to make a very good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Outdoor provision has improved since the last inspection and is now in full use. All pupils in the school meet the challenging targets set for them and make outstanding progress. Standards in all subjects are well above average and pupils make outstanding progress. The school has placed a strong emphasis on mathematics following a slight dip in 2008 and there is clear evidence that this has been improved, reflecting outstanding progress and exceptionally high attainment. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and they come to lessons ready to learn, finding them fun and interesting.

Academic support is very effective for all pupils, including those who are new to the school and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who also make outstanding progress. Pupils are extremely well prepared for their next stage in education. On occasions, during their lessons, pupils demonstrate a lack of confidence in expressing themselves and taking an active part in their learning. The curriculum is rich, vibrant and comprehensive, engaging the interest of all pupils. Care, guidance and support are outstanding and procedures to ensure pupils are safe are rigorous. Outstanding leadership and management, involving staff and governors as an excellent team, play a very significant part in the success of the school. The school now needs to extend its contribution to the wider community by further developing learners' understanding of other communities, regionally, nationally and internationally.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 1

Attainment on entry has declined slightly in recent years and children now enter school with the skills expected for their age. Children's 'Learning journey records' show a starting point that fits average expectation and now clearly demonstrate above and well above skill levels in key areas of learning. Children achieve exceptionally well and by the end of the year possess skills which are mostly very much above average. Teaching and learning and the curriculum focus on providing challenge in core skills, promoting very good progress. Children are confident in using numbers as labels for counting, but weaker in writing and physical coordination. Children make exceptionally good progress over the year including in writing, but as a skill it still lags behind the other areas. Leadership and management are outstanding. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has a clear plan of how to investigate writing by widening the already very effective

assessment process to focus on developmental points. This will give a more detailed picture of precisely what aspects of coordination hold children back, introducing more varied resources such as a free standing fruit and vegetable garden which provides a wider range of handling tools and materials. Very good assessment means the curriculum is adapted very precisely to children's need and this promotes rapid progress. The key factor in progress is the very high quality of teaching and care. Children want to learn in what they feel is a safe and secure environment where they can investigate, play and experiment, their eyes glow with wonder at the natural world, like watching the cocoons in the hatching net for the moment the butterflies emerge.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Extend the already excellent learning in the school by ensuring there are more opportunities for pupils to openly discuss their views and share their opinions, and include independent learning as an integral element in planning.
- Further promote community cohesion by engaging with communities outside the school community, regionally, nationally and internationally reaching out to other faiths, cultures and backgrounds.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

All pupils make outstanding progress, regardless of background and ability. The standards reached by the time pupils leave Year 6 are well above national expectations in all subjects. Pupils' achievement is outstanding. This is because of the excellent focused support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants, and accurate assessment and rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures. Issues such as a dip in Key Stage 1 mathematics, particularly with boys, are identified rapidly and highly effective strategies put in place to address them successfully. Pupils in Year 2 have now attained standards in mathematics that are as high as those in English.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development and well-being are excellent. Pupils love being at school. Their outstanding attendance and enthusiasm and joy for learning are infectious. They are extremely articulate but on occasions show a reticence to share their thoughts and questions. They feel safe and secure and their behaviour is exemplary, with older pupils showing great compassion and tenderness for the youngest in the school. Pupils have a growing sense of self and their own unique potential, having a desire to achieve and do their best, demonstrating a very good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. They have a strong sense of right and wrong. They relate very well to each other and display a sense of belonging. Pupils have a very good understanding of cultural traditions respecting their own and others' cultures. They have an excellent sense of community, for example Year 6 pupils saying when asked about their school community, 'We live in a multicultural society and school helps us to understand this' and 'If you are scared of different cultures school helps you to understand why you shouldn't be.' Links with the local church and other Christian activities are particularly strong. Pupils make outstanding progress in developing the skills needed for their future lives.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

Excellent challenge for all pupils and high expectations are examples of why teaching and learning are outstanding. Staff demonstrate exemplary classroom management, modelling the calm and very good behaviour they want from pupils. Positive relationships enable pupils to ask searching questions, such as 'Can you make an inverse out of some of these Pi formulae.' Extremely well-targeted tasks, based on accurate assessment, fit pupils' needs very well. Class teachers very successfully involve all pupils in knowing the processes of their learning. They do this by studying pupils' targets and providing very detailed marking which gives pupils a clear picture of their successes and where to improve. The care for pupils is evident across the whole school; pupils know how much they are valued and grow in stature because of it.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The excellent curriculum is adapted to the needs of groups and individuals in its range and integration of subjects. The curriculum underpins pupils' personal development very effectively resulting in confident, caring and sensible young people who are very well aware of how to stay safe and healthy. It is superbly enriched to give pupils a diversity of real experiences to support their classroom learning and promote excellent progress. Core skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, are both celebrated and utilised in a way that enhances subjects and strengthens the skills themselves. The curriculum is wherever possible practical, for example, skills of using and applying mathematics are as important as the numbers, making and measuring circles to cement pupils' understanding of Pi formulae. It is exceptionally well adapted to all pupils' needs, catering for the more able, for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or for those wrestling with English as a completely new language. Displays entitled 'What a Wonderful World' and 'Together we are British' enlarge the multicultural dimension of the school with Chinese opera faces, Hindu and Muslim Mendhi patterns and Rangoli.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The school demonstrates outstanding care for all pupils ensuring they are safe and secure. A caring ethos permeates throughout the school and great attention is given to the holistic needs of all pupils. Sensitive and timely pastoral care is used effectively to support pupils enabling them to make exceptional progress. Safeguarding requirements are fully met. Links with families and external agencies are very good. Pupils have a very good understanding of where they are in their learning journey as a result of rigorous assessment and tracking procedures, which enable individuals and groups of pupils to be targeted effectively.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

Leaders and managers make a highly effective and cohesive team with exceptional qualities, driving the school forward and maintaining outstanding academic standards whilst maintaining very high quality care for the pupils in their school.

The individual strengths of the leadership team are capitalised on and provide a dynamic momentum which is particularly valuable to recently qualified teachers, providing a model of best practice and strong support. They have created a common sense of purpose. Challenging targets are used to raise standards and systematic analysis of pupil tracking is detailed and covers the full range of pupils. Inclusion is central to the role of the school and learners are given outstanding support to overcome barriers to learning. School self-evaluation is searching and accurate. Community cohesion is good, although some aspects, such as links with other schools regionally, nationally and internationally, have been rightfully identified as areas for further development. The governors provide robust and rigorous challenge to maintain the very high standard set in all aspects of school life. The school's capacity for improvement based on the progress pupils make, the excellent educational direction and the improvements since the previous inspection are outstanding.

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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?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<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	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?	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	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**

6 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Birmingham, B17 DN

Thank you for the lovely welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. You are rightly very proud of your school and what it does for you. We really enjoyed talking to you and we are very grateful for the excellent contribution you made to the inspection. Yours is an outstanding school.

- Here are some of the highlights.
- You make a very good start when you join school in the Reception class and like playing in the outdoor area.
- You make excellent progress and by the time you reach Year 6, you reach standards that are much higher than those of most children of the same age.
- You behave exceptionally well and you are most polite. You have a very good understanding of how to keep yourselves safe and you show great care for each other.
- You love coming to school and are very keen to learn.
- You are taught extremely well and your teachers work very hard to make sure your lessons are practical and fun. You have a very good understanding of how you can get better in your work.
- The headteacher and senior staff provide very strong leadership to help you do your very best.
- Everyone in the school works together and you are looked after extremely well so you feel safe and happy.
- Even though St Mary's is an outstanding school, there are some things it can do to make it even better.
- Extend your already excellent learning by making sure teachers help you to discuss your views and share your opinions and by helping you learn more independently.
- Provide opportunities so that you can learn about and engage with communities outside your school community, regionally, nationally and internationally.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours faithfully,

Susie Wallis-Maclean

Lead inspector