

St Mary Magdalene Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103989
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	323938
Inspection date	1 October 2008
Reporting inspector	David Carrington

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 controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	231
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	Richard Franks
Headteacher	Jason Willetts
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Stanway Road West Bromwich B71 1RP
Telephone number	01215 882371
Fax number	01215 888454

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

How effectively achievement in mathematics in Key Stage 1 and writing in Key Stage 2 are being improved.

Whether the limited outside space is having a major impact on the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

How far the school takes account of the views of parents and pupils in its improvement planning.

Evidence was gathered from:

published assessment data

the school's own records

parents' questionnaires

observations in all classes

interviews with staff, governors and pupils. Bullet symbols should be squareOther 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 is an average sized primary school with one Nursery and one Reception class in its EYFS. There is one class in each year from Years 1 to 6. The intake to the school has altered during the last few years, and attainment on entry has fallen, with only a few pupils now working at the expected levels for their age when they start school in the EYFS.

Most pupils come from White British families although there are fairly large groups of pupils from Indian and Black Caribbean backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average. Just over a fifth of the pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including dyslexia and communication difficulties. which is also above average. Around a quarter of the pupils do not complete their primary education at the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The pupils at St Mary Magdalene Church of England Junior and Infant School go to a good school. They know this, and so do their parents who have overwhelmingly positive views of the school. The headteacher has built well on the school's past successes. He has raised the expectations of staff and pupils and shared out the responsibility for achievement, standards and the quality of provision in a very effective way. Everyone associated with the school sees themselves as part of the St Mary's team who work hard to live up to the school motto, 'Love to learn, learn to love'. They do this with obvious success.

Standards have continued to rise over the last five years and pupils' achievement is good. Standards in Year 6 are above average, which reflects good progress from these pupils' starting points in the Nursery. Standards in Key Stage 2 writing have lagged behind those in reading, mathematics and science, but they are moving ahead well since the school redoubled its focus on writing last year. There are some good quality examples of pupils' writing on display. The school's work to enable pupils to increase the effectiveness of their sentences by 'up-levelling' them is particularly effective. The older pupils very much enjoy thinking of novel ways to make their writing expressive and gripping.

Standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average, which also represents good progress for these pupils from their starting levels four years earlier. Mathematics has been a particular focus for improvement in Years 1 and 2. This has been achieved with notable success and standards in mathematics now match those in reading, writing and science. Like the pupils in other classes, Year 2 are developing 'snappy maths' skills with great enthusiasm and enjoyment. During the last five years there have not been enough pupils reaching the higher levels in the national tests in both Key Stages 1 and 2. This is the major area for improvement this coming year and the school has rightly identified the need to ensure that these pupils are stretched consistently in all lessons. Indian and Black Caribbean pupils throughout the school achieve as well as those from other ethnic groups. Pupils who join the school during the year soon settle to productive work and make good progress due to the care given to their individual needs.

Children make a brisk start to their EYFS education. They make good progress through both the Nursery and Reception classes. This applies as much to their personal, social and emotional development as it does to the more academic areas of their work. This good personal development sets them up well for Key Stages 1 and 2 where pupils' personal development continues to improve and reaches an outstanding quality. All pupils enjoy their work and leisure immensely. They develop exceptionally harmonious relationships with each other and the adults in school. Racial harmony is very good and the pupils are extremely proud of the school community and the way that they are able to contribute to it. Their concern for the welfare of others contributes greatly to the first-rate development of community cohesion. The pupils have an exceptionally good awareness of health and safety matters and have sensible ideas for making the school a safer, healthier place for everyone. Their suggestions are taken seriously and acted upon whenever possible, helping pupils to make a good contribution to school improvement. Consequently, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding and is a particular strength of the school.

The good quality of care, guidance and support in school ensures that pupils are safeguarded properly and quickly learn to behave well. Attendance rates have been a little below average until recently. The school works hard to discourage unauthorised absence and the overall rate

of attendance is rising due to these good efforts. Pupils are given good guidance about ways to improve their work. The quality of assessment, target sharing and marking is good and is an important factor in pupils' good achievement.

Teaching is good across the school, with some outstanding teaching in several classes. Teachers make the work interesting and involving, and they set motivating challenges for most pupils, although occasionally the more able are not stretched enough. Teaching assistants show considerable talent in their support for children in the EYFS, for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for those who speak English as an additional language. This enables these pupils to make consistently good progress across the school.

The good curriculum is rich and rewarding, particularly in the core subjects. The school has already begun a programme to improve resources and the curriculum for information and communication technology (ICT). Senior leaders know there is more work ahead if pupils' ICT skills and knowledge are to be as secure as their good basic skills in literacy and numeracy. The curriculum is well planned and there are ample opportunities for pupils to develop the necessary qualities of teamwork, independence and initiative that will give them a good start in the next stage of their education.

The many strengths of the school are due to its good leadership and management. The headteacher shows great determination, very well focused direction and high expectations. He also brings sensitivity and thoughtfulness to his work. Senior leaders are a fairly new team but have already established themselves as effective agents for change and development. There is total agreement on the priorities for school improvement, including how they should be tackled and how success should be judged. The school is developing an improved partnership with parents and nearly all of them think staff listen to their views and respond well to them when deciding how to improve the school.

Improvement is a way of life for staff and the governors. Questions are asked to ensure that decisions are the right ones to raise pupils' achievement further. Governors carry out a key role in this, and do so effectively. There are very well-established and rigorous systems to monitor how the school is progressing. It has made good headway over the last few years and is set to continue this advance in the time ahead.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The strengths of provision and the positive development of skills and knowledge across all six areas of the EYFS curriculum show that the standard of education for these young children is good. Provision is well led by a very committed team who are keen to make provision even better. They are working effectively to strengthen further their assessment of early skills in order to ensure the children are always provided with the essential experiences to take the next steps in their learning.

The children in Nursery are achieving well and they make good progress from their starting points. Although they have only been in school a short time, they are already showing greater confidence and better communication skills. Children in Reception thoroughly enjoy their work and their play, and continue to progress well. Standards are rising and the children are on target to reach standards that are only slightly below average by the end of the school year.

Teaching is good in the EYFS and is coupled with good arrangements for children's welfare. Thus, children are enabled to learn and develop successfully. Space is very limited outdoors

but staff ensure that this does not have a negative effect on learning; staff are skilled at using every corner as a place where children can investigate, experiment, play and take controlled risks under the watchful eye of an adult. Consequently, indoors or out, school is clearly a fun place for children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the proportion of pupils reaching Level 3 in Year 2 and Level 5 in Year 6.
- Develop the provision for ICT so that pupils achieve well in the subject.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
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?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

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	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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 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

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	1
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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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

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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary Magdalene CofE Junior and Infant School, West Bromwich, B71 1RP

What a good day we had when we visited your school recently. Much of this was due to the welcome you gave us and the way you were keen to show us what is special about your school. Thank you for helping us to find out some of the things that we have written about in our report. If you look at the report, you will find it says these things.

- You are making good progress and reaching standards that are higher than expected for your age.
- Your lessons are enjoyable and interesting and you are taught well.
- Children in Nursery and Reception are eager to learn and they do well.
- You work and play together really well and your behaviour is good.
- Your teachers and the other adults look after you carefully.
- Mr Willetts wants you to reach really good standards in your work.
- The staff and governors join him in leading the school with enthusiasm and skill.
- St Mary Magdalene School is a fun place to be.

Our report also suggests there are two things to work on now.

- More of you can be helped to reach the higher levels in your tests.
- Improvements can be made to the work in ICT so you develop stronger skills in the subject.

We know you will help your teachers to make these improvements. As a start, you can try to make the next piece of work you do as good as it can be.

We wish you great success in school.

Yours sincerely

David Carrington Lead inspector