

# St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

## Aided

### Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108618
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Tyneside
<b>Inspection number</b>	324805
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Derek Neil HMI

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	255
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>	Mr Fred Stimpson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Pete Murray
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 October 2005
<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>	Farringdon Road Cullercoats North Shields Tyne and Wear NE30 3EY

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 October 2008
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. Her Majesty's Inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: improvements in teaching and in governance since the last inspection, and pupils' understanding of different cultures. The Additional Inspector evaluated the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form (SEF); national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; a range of school documentation; observation of the school at work; discussions with staff and pupils; and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but there is no evidence to suggest that the school's own evaluations, as given in its SEF, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary is a slightly larger than average school in the Cullercoats ward of North Tyneside. The proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals and with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are below average. Very few pupils are from a minority ethnic background. All pupils speak English as their first language. The school has the Healthy School Award and the ActiveMark.

## 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. The inspection confirmed the school's own view that it 'promotes achievement, individual worth, and respect for others'. The overwhelming majority of the many parents who returned the inspection questionnaire greatly appreciate what the school offers. One summed it up neatly by saying, 'My child is very happy at school, makes very good progress, and enjoys the curriculum experiences.'

Pupils enter Key Stage 1 with skills that are well above the national average. The results of national tests and the school's own assessment data demonstrate that pupils continue to make rapid progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 to achieve very high standards by the time they are 11. Their written English shows a good vocabulary and range of expression, and a high degree of technical accuracy. Their progress in mathematics has been less good than in English but the school's data indicate that this is now also very good because of the extra emphasis the teachers have given to the subject recently. The staff are aware that pupils still need to develop a broader range of calculation strategies that they can use with confidence. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make extremely good progress because of the very effective additional support that is provided when staff have recognised they are not keeping up with the rest of the class.

Staff rightly claim that the pupils develop into 'well rounded and polite children'. They thoroughly enjoy school, in particular the opportunities to make friends and, in their own words, to 'learn new things'. Attendance at school is very high and many pupils participate in extra-curricular activities. Their behaviour is exemplary; they are courteous and confident when talking with adults. They know that to stay healthy they need to exercise and eat a balanced diet. They are highly active at play time and many participate in sporting activities outside school. They feel safe in school, and know who to turn to if they need help. Bullying is unheard of. Pupils contribute to the school and wider community in a variety of ways, most notably through fundraising, through which they learn valuable enterprise and budgeting skills. The school council is increasingly active and pupils report that it is beginning to make a difference, although they would like to see its impact more speedily than at present.

The rapid progress pupils make is due to some excellent teaching throughout the school. The main strengths of lessons are the teachers' high expectations of what the pupils can achieve, the interesting and lively way they present new material, and the use of humour to keep children happy and paying attention. Some activities are very imaginative; for example, in one lesson where pupils were learning to use a comma between items in a list, one of the tasks was to complete the sentence, 'If I were a dragon I would eat....' Pupils respond very well; the great majority listen attentively to the teacher, discuss their work sensibly in pairs, and are very quick to settle to written work on their own.

As well as the very effective coverage of basic skills and the flexibility to provide individual attention for pupils who need it, the curriculum's greatest strength (and its most popular feature) is the use of the regular theme days and weeks when pupils enjoy a rich and varied range of exciting experiences. Their evaluations of events such as Africa week and the arts week are overwhelmingly positive. Not the least important aspect of their learning on these occasions is their understanding of and respect for different cultures in this country and around the world. Typical comments are: 'it's a big world and you shouldn't just think about yourself'; and 'you shouldn't treat people differently just because of the colour of their skin'. These

events make a significant contribution to the way the school promotes community cohesion. A small number of parents feel the school could offer more extra-curricular activities but the inspection found the provision satisfactory; over the year pupils are offered a varied range of opportunities. The outdoor space is not fully exploited: opportunities for play are limited; an area that has been used for conservation projects has fallen into disuse; and the school has identified the need to improve the outdoor area for the Foundation Stage.

Pupils are extremely well cared for. A typical comment from parents was: 'The ethos is positive, nurturing and inclusive; there is a real sense of community.' Parents are particularly impressed with the smooth transition from the Nursery to Reception and from Year 6 to secondary school. The school meets requirements for safeguarding its pupils. Pupils are supervised well at work and play, and plans to extend the perimeter fence will further increase the security of the premises. Academic guidance is very good. Thorough systems for monitoring pupils' progress work very effectively; anyone at risk of underachieving is supported well and is soon back on track. Recent improvements in mathematics are, to a great extent, due to the increased frequency with which teachers now assess pupils' progress in the subject. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and teachers provide good commentaries about what the pupils are doing well and clear advice on how to improve. At present, staff are experimenting with different systems for setting individual targets for improvement; they recognise the advisability of having a standard system across the school.

These outstanding outcomes are achieved because of highly effective leadership and management. The staff work well as a team, committed to a shared vision of maintaining high standards while developing well rounded children. Governance has improved since the last inspection; governors are now well informed about and involved in the life of the school. A good range of methods is used for evaluating the performance of the school; in particular, pupils are regularly asked to comment on how much they enjoy the special curriculum events. Some parents feel the school does not take enough account of their opinions but the inspection found no evidence to support this minority view.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Children enter the Nursery with skills that are slightly above what is typical for their age. They make excellent progress throughout the EYFS and by the end of Reception, standards are well above those typical of the age group. The provision in the EYFS is outstanding. Parents value the excellent opportunities available in the Nursery. It has been recently refurbished and provides an excellent environment for children to learn and develop. Children thoroughly enjoy coming to the Nursery. As one parent commented, 'In a short time my child has become very enthusiastic about coming here. She has become very confident. She particularly enjoyed the Rwandan music group and Pat the Hat telling stories.' Children are happy, safe and secure. As a result of excellent teaching they make very good progress. Teamwork and daily discussion inform day-to-day planning, which ensures children's prior learning is the foundation for subsequent work. Well established systems for pre-Nursery visits enable all children to settle quickly and get off to an excellent start. Independent learning skills are thoughtfully developed through a careful balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activities. The outdoor space is used well but the small size of the covered area restricts play when the weather is bad. Teaching assistants are well trained and work closely and successfully with small groups and individuals. The EYFS is extremely well organised and managed. Assessment procedures are robust and used very

well to plan the next steps in learning. Welfare procedures are secure and contribute to the calm, happy atmosphere throughout the unit.

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

- Improve the opportunities for play and work in the outdoor areas.

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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	2

### 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

<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	2
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	2
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	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**

22 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School Aided, North Tyneside, NE30 3EY

Thank you for welcoming me so warmly into your school. I enjoyed watching you in lessons and at play; talking about your school with you and your teachers; and looking at your work. Now I want to share with you what I found.

St Mary's is an outstanding school. Here are some of the many things I liked about it.

- You told me you really like coming to school and feel safe there.
- You like your lessons and the staff. I can see why: you have some very good teachers. They make you work very hard and try to make sure you enjoy it.
- You are achieving very high standards. Well done!
- You really enjoy the special theme days and weeks when you do lots of exciting things and learn some important lessons about the world we live in.
- You know how important it is to eat healthily and take exercise. I was pleased to hear that many of you are involved in sporting activities outside school.
- You behave extremely well in class and in the playground. You try hard in lessons and get on with your work very sensibly. You should be proud of this.
- Your teachers and other staff take very good care of you. They are keen to make sure you are happy and safe.
- Many of you are very grown up and help with the running of the school; the school council, for instance, has begun to carry out some useful work. I agree with those of you who said you would like it to do even more.

I think you and your teachers could make the school even better. You would enjoy the outdoor area more than you do at present if you had more play equipment. There are other ways in which the outdoor space could be used more. The school council could make a valuable contribution to this development.

You are lucky to go to such a high achieving school. Thank you again for helping me with the inspection. It was a pleasure to meet you.

With very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Neil

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools