

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112338
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	325584
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sheila Mawer

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.

---

<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)	142
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 Michael Rooney
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Catherine Pearson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 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>	Holden Road Salterbeck Workington Cumbria CA14 5LN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01946 830433
<b>Fax number</b>	01946 830430

---

<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 June 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	325584

---

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

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

- standards and achievement, especially in writing in Key Stage 1 and science in Key Stage 2
- how well community cohesion is being developed in the United Kingdom and in the wider world
- how well the school has improved behaviour from the previous inspection
- how successfully the school has addressed the areas for improvement at the previous inspection, namely tracking progress and strengthening subject leadership.

Evidence was collected from lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment information and the school's self-evaluation. Discussions were held with staff, governors and pupils, and questionnaires returned by parents were considered. A range of documentation was also examined. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

All of the pupils attending this smaller than average school are from White British families. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very high. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for 26 Reception children in a class that is shared with a small number of Year 1 pupils. A high proportion of pupils join the school at times other than Reception. There is a privately run pre-school on site. This is being inspected and reported upon separately by Ofsted.

## 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 continues to provide its pupils with an outstanding quality of education. The headteacher, staff and governors have reached excellence in nearly all areas of provision and addressed successfully the issues from the previous inspection. The school's commitment for every child to succeed and flourish is well and truly met. Parents are delighted with every aspect of the school and the exceptional outcomes it achieves for their children. In a high return of questionnaires, every comment and ticked responses were positive.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding from very low starting points when they enter Reception. In teacher assessments by Year 2, standards in 2008 were broadly average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing. Results in the national tests in Year 6 have shown an upward trend in the past three years. They were above average in 2008 in English and mathematics and broadly average in science. Current standards from the latest teacher assessments in Year 2 are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. In Year 6 the most recent assessments shows standards that are above average in English, mathematics and science and well above average at the higher Level 5. This shows excellent progress as close to half the pupils in Year 6 have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In Key Stage 2 more focus on investigative science has helped to raise standards by Year 6. Improved standards in writing in Key Stage 1 are the result of very good opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills in other subjects. Staff also share good practice together and take on board new initiatives to help improve pupils' writing. Handwriting skills are much weaker through the school. By Year 6 few pupils use a fluent joined script in their writing.

High expectations in the excellent teaching lead to impressive gains made by all pupils. Teachers are exceptionally skilled at planning and adapting work successfully for pupils of different abilities and providing challenging tasks, especially for more able pupils. Excellent relationships, vibrant lessons, and a very good range of resources inspire all pupils to succeed. The recent experiences from an adventure week are being used very effectively in the teaching to inspire pupils in their writing and discussions. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported because teaching assistants are well briefed before the lesson and clearly understand their roles. 'Catch up' programmes for these pupils are rigorously planned and tasks are explained clearly. A major impact on pupils' achievement and their high levels of motivation is through target setting. Pupils regularly monitor their own progress against challenging targets in different subjects and know how well they are doing. Very informative marking gives them clear points for improvement.

The outstanding curriculum enriches pupils' learning, contributes significantly to their high achievement and fully meets their needs. Pupils benefit enormously from an extensive range of activities, visits and visitors. Personal, social and health development is strongly promoted and citizenship receives a high focus. Conservation is an important aspect of the curriculum and fully exploited through an Eco club and partnership with Cumbria Wildlife. Substantial links are established with different partners to promote good community cohesion. The provision is well planned and evaluated and contributes well to pupils' understanding of different cultures, faiths and ethnic groups in the local and wider world. The school is at the centre of the local community, regularly inviting residents to special events and joining other schools for sporting and musical festivals. Links with an inner city school are developing strongly as well as an increasing awareness of worldwide issues through fundraising, visits to London and Paris and exchanging artwork with a school in Japan. These wide ranging initiatives are having a major

impact on pupils' genuine concern and compassion for others, and in their ability to value diversity.

An exceptionally caring ethos successfully promotes pupils' outstanding personal development, including excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils who are new to the school quickly settle because staff take the time to respond quickly to any worries or concerns. Because the welfare of each child is of paramount importance, excellent attention is given to safety issues. Safeguarding meets government requirements. Pupils when questioned quickly recalled safety issues such as saying no to strangers and drugs. All pupils really enjoy school and work extremely hard. Although attendance is average, it is improving and higher than that found in similar schools nationally. The school is doing everything possible to improve attendance, particularly from the few pupils who are persistently absent. Behaviour is exemplary, with no recent exclusions or racial incidents. Healthy School status and Activemark recognition confirms the school's strong focus on healthy living. Pupils choose healthy options at lunchtime and the take-up of sporting clubs after school is high. School councillors enjoy being responsible for improving equipment outdoors to keep pupils fit. Older pupils recently organised a 'super healthy learning day' and invited many different health professionals to lead discussions. Pupils are very well prepared for life ahead both personally and academically. As one parent said, 'They leave the school as well rounded, confident children, safe in the knowledge that at St Mary's they were very special'.

Leadership and management are outstanding and rigorously focused on continual improvement. The school's sustained success is due to the driving force and dedication of a highly experienced headteacher, who is well supported by a very able deputy. Together they lead by example, totally committed to providing high quality provision and outstanding achievement. Teamwork with staff and governors is excellent. Everyone plays a valuable part in moving the school forward. Newly qualified staff at the previous inspection, have been supported exceptionally well to take on more responsibility. They are now confident and able subject leaders. Systems to track progress, which were weaker in the past, are now very effective. They enable challenging targets to be set and met, which reflect senior leaders' high expectations of pupils' capabilities. Governors play a full and active part in the school's strategic leadership. They have a very good understanding of the school's performance through their various monitoring roles and tireless support. Their governance is excellent. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses exceptionally well through accurate self-evaluation. Its determination to continue to strengthen its exceptional quality and performance demonstrates an outstanding capacity for continued improvement.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Children have an excellent start to their education and provision is outstanding. Their skills on entry to Reception are very low, especially in language and communications. Children trust the adults who provide them with excellent care, guidance and support and their personal development is outstanding. They quickly learn to listen carefully, follow instructions and grasp daily routines. All are very happy and secure, and play together extremely well. They quickly become independent, able to register their own attendance and decide when to eat their daily portion of fruit. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Children make rapid progress through challenging tasks that are well matched to their needs. These experiences build on their confidence and help them to fully participate in adult directed activities and to make choices for themselves. Indoors they were thrilled when 'Cinderella' arrived; some eagerly composing

letters to her while others enthusiastically made her sparkling crown. Outdoors, children skilfully manoeuvre model cars controlled by remote handsets. Children achieve very well and make excellent progress from their starting points. Nevertheless at the start of Year 1, standards are generally below average, particularly in language and communications. Leadership is excellent and teamwork is very strong. The organisation is first-rate, reflecting accurately the requirements for children of this age. Assessment practices are exemplary and used very successfully to plan challenging work. Very good communication with parents is enhanced by regular questionnaires and open days. It is no surprise that all parents are very positive about their children's year in Reception.

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

- Improve handwriting skills through the school so that by Year 6 pupils are using a fluent and legible joined script.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------

### 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	2
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	3
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?	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**

20 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Cumbria, CA14 5LN

I would like to thank you all very much indeed for making our visit to your school such a happy and rewarding experience. A special thanks goes to the school council who gave up part of their lunchtime to talk to me. It was such a pleasure to see you all working so hard and behaving really well. The rock challenge dance that some of you performed for us showed clearly how much you all enjoy keeping fit, working together and thoroughly enjoying school life. You have every reason to be proud of your school, as it gives you an outstanding quality of education.

These are some of the really great things about your school.

- Your achievement is excellent and by Year 6, standards are above average.
- Those in the Reception class are making very good progress because you all enjoy working really hard. We were sorry not to see your finished letters and crowns for Cinderella.
- You are all taught exceptionally well and receive excellent guidance and support.
- Your personal development is excellent and behaviour that was good at the previous inspection is now outstanding. So well done everyone!
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher, all staff and governors are continually improving your education, to make it the best possible for you all. They have been very successful and their leadership and management are outstanding.
- The wonderful displays around the school showed us how rich and successful the curriculum is. It was good to see how much you all enjoyed your adventure week. The school council told me that everything you do at school is great and especially clubs after school.

We were very impressed with the content of your writing, but your handwriting skills are weak. Hardly any of you in Key Stage 2 are using a joined script. Although we know you practise doing joined handwriting, you are not using your skills when you write in literacy and other subjects. We hope you will all try very hard to write with a joined script in Key Stage 2, so that your handwriting skills will be as good as the content of your writing.

Best wishes to you all in the future and good luck with the handwriting.

Yours faithfully

Sheila Mawer

Lead inspector