

## St Mary Magdalen Catholic Primary School

### Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114541
<b>Local Authority</b>	Brighton and Hove
<b>Inspection number</b>	326034
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 April 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ken Bryan

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)	257
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>	Fiona Wookey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Halden Eady
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 December 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>	Spring Street Brighton BN1 3EF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01273 327533
<b>Fax number</b>	01273 327259

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 April 2009
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a slightly above-average-sized Catholic primary school situated in the heart of Brighton. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average and this is increasing each year. Correspondingly, the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is also increasing and is currently considerably above average. Thirty-five different languages are spoken in the school and 38 pupils are at the early stages of English language acquisition. Children start school in Nursery as part of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. Central to this success are the good leadership and management of the headteacher and her senior team. Around them, they have developed a dedicated and committed staff that has enabled pupils to thrive within an environment that is very conducive to learning. Through the help of the supportive governing body, the school's leadership team has set high expectations for the school. They have a clear idea of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The overwhelming majority of the parents are supportive of the school. One parent enthused that 'the school's great diversity, in culture, language and faith results in an extraordinary unity'. There is a good capacity to improve further and to ensure that improvements already evident in Key Stages 1 and 2 are sustained.

Pupils enter the school with skills and attitudes that are well below age-related expectations. For many pupils, English is an additional language, and a significant proportion are at the early stages of English language acquisition. This profile is increasing year on year. In addition, nearly a third of children start school with speech and language difficulties. This has presented the Early Years Foundation Stage staff with many challenges. Well-targeted interventions ensure that children make good progress. In addition, the good provision the children receive in the Nursery and Reception classes ensures that all pupils make a very settled start to their school education. The new indoor and outdoor accommodation is already leading to improved outcomes. The school is now able to demonstrate better standards and achievement at Key Stage 1. Despite this, pupils still enter Key Stage 2 with standards that are below national averages. By the time the pupils leave the school, standards are broadly average. This represents good progress as a consequence of the good teaching and support the pupils receive. Few pupils achieve the highest levels, especially in mathematics and writing. The school has correctly identified the need to use assessment more effectively to set more challenging targets, and for subject leaders to play a greater role in scrutiny and analysis of pupils' progress data. Already, there are signs of an improving picture, with many pupils on course to achieve above-average levels at the end of both key stages.

Pupils achieve very well as a result of the well-planned and engaging curriculum on offer. Teaching is good overall, with significant strengths in the quality of the planning of activities to meet the needs of all pupils and the efficient deployment of additional adults to support learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those pupils for whom English is an additional language usually make good progress. An increasing number of pupils, including many who are recent arrivals in this country, make rapid progress as a result of the support they receive. Pupils and adults have developed very positive relationships, which results in happy children who feel safe and well supported. The behaviour of the pupils is excellent and they demonstrate very good attitudes to learning. This nurturing Catholic environment has enabled pupils to make good progress personally and academically. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children make a positive start to their school education in the Early Years Foundation Stage Nursery class, where they quickly settle to the routines and demands placed upon them. The management of the care and safety of the children is excellent and they feel secure and happy within a very culturally diverse learning environment. Children arrive in school with skills,

experience and attitudes that are significantly below age-related expectations. Many children start school with limited or no English language proficiency. The children progress well because of the good teaching and care they receive. Despite this, because of low starting points, standards are well below average by the time they enter Year 1. The staff give high priority to addressing the needs of the children, particularly in encouraging communication, language and literacy and in personal, social and emotional development. The children enjoy the activities provided for them, especially the newly created outdoor area, which is a major development since the last inspection. This facility is already being carefully developed to support the six areas of learning covered in the early years. The teachers and support staff track children's progress rigorously and make good use of this information to plan for the next steps of learning. Excellent links have been established with parents, pre-school settings, external organisations and Key Stage 1 staff to ensure effective support, smooth transitions and continuity. One parent summed up the views of many in stating that the Early Years Foundation Stage is 'a beautiful environment for little people to learn'. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. The new leader is rapidly developing a clear understanding of the key priorities in the Nursery and Reception classes through careful collaborations and robust systems to track pupil progress. Some initiatives have yet to have full impact but the future looks bright.

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

- Use assessment information more effectively to set targets for all pupils, particularly the most able, and to involve the children in establishing what they need to do to improve.
- Develop the strategic role of the subject leaders, particularly in the analysis of pupil progress data, in order to improve the effectiveness of action planning and evaluation.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Children start school with skills that are very well below age-related expectations, particularly in relation to communication, language and literacy and in personal, social and emotional development. Significant numbers of children are new to the country and speak little or no English. Many pupils enter Year 1 still well below average, despite making good progress. The school's provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language and those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities very effectively meets their varied needs. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1, even though standards are still significantly below average as they enter Key Stage 2. Progress in Key Stage 2 is good, with standards achieved at the end of Year 6 usually being in line with national averages. There are high numbers of pupils joining the school in all year groups and many pupils start the school in each year group with very limited English proficiency. The school is able to demonstrate that many pupils make very rapid progress throughout Key Stage 2 to leave the school at least in line with the national average. Overall standards are broadly average at the end of Year 6.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils clearly enjoy their education and they have developed extremely positive relationships with adults and with one another. Across the school, the behaviour and attitudes of the pupils are exemplary. Pupils demonstrate courtesy and kindness to others that speak volumes about the overall ethos of the school. The pupils report that they feel extremely safe and that they

benefit immensely from the school's different backgrounds and cultures. As a result, bullying and racist incidents are particularly rare. A good example of such cooperation and helpfulness is the setting up of equipment for playtimes that results in a very busy and safe outdoor environment. This includes a well-tended vegetable garden that is indicative of the creative way the school maximises the external space. The effective deployment of the school council and peer mentors or buddies makes a strong contribution to the school's inclusive and supportive ethos. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of right and wrong, show a mature sensitivity to spiritual themes and multi-faith activities, and have a highly sympathetic understanding of the different cultures reflected in their diverse learning community. The level of pupil attendance is average. Absence rates are adversely affected by the number of holidays taken during term time. The school is working very hard with the parents to reduce such instances. The pupils are well prepared for future study and life outside school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The overall quality of teaching is good, with some outstanding aspects, such as the provision for pupils for whom English is not their first language. Many pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make rapid progress, often from very low starting points, because of rigorous planning and precise differentiation. The careful monitoring of classroom practice and the use of collaborative planning have resulted in greater consistency and improved outcomes, especially in Key Stage 1. The teachers are fully committed to providing interesting and meaningful lessons that engage the children. There is good liaison between the teachers and other adults, which includes a growing army of volunteers. These significantly enhance the learning experiences of the pupils and positively promote inclusion. The teachers have developed very positive relationships with parents and other organisations to ensure that all groups of pupils receive well-targeted and timely interventions. In addition, the consistent use of effective behaviour management strategies and the establishment of excellent relationships have resulted in the pupils' exemplary behaviour. The teachers mark pupils' work very well and there is a consistent approach to target setting. However, the school has correctly identified that improving standards in writing and mathematics will result from the better use of assessments and the setting of more challenging targets, particularly for higher attaining pupils.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is broad, balanced and engaging and meets the varied needs of the school's diverse pupil population. The deployment of resources, personnel and teaching space is both creative and effective. Whilst the available space for physical education is limited, the school is innovative in the way it uses the school's external and internal environment. The school's good programme of enrichment activities contributes to a high level of interest. These include numerous visits and the use of visitors, clubs and sporting and church activities. These encourage the pupils to succeed and enjoy their time in and out of school. Many activities reflect the school's diverse setting and enhance each pupil's understanding of multicultural Britain. The school's creative curriculum ensures that cross-curricular programmes engage and motivate the pupils. There is good provision for literacy and numeracy that effectively strengthens other subjects and themes. The use of information and communication technology is satisfactory but

within the context of the overall good curriculum is an area for further development. The school's robust personal, social, health and citizenship programme ensures that pupils lead healthy and active lifestyles. The school holds the Healthy School and Activemark awards.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's caring environment is very conducive to learning. The atmosphere is nurturing and purposeful, which results in the development of positive relationships and attitudes. Excellent systems are in place to ensure the good physical care of the children. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective. Procedures are strenuously followed to ensure that the welfare of the children is secure. Many parents agree with this. One stated that 'the school is a safe, stimulating and caring environment', which sums up the feeling of the overwhelming majority of parents. Systems for the tracking of pupils' academic progress are less well developed than those for pastoral care. The school has introduced consistent procedures to comment upon the quality of the children's work. The school recognises that this should be extended further to ensure that individual challenging targets for improvement are set and that pupils need to participate in self-assessment. The support given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and to those pupils for whom English is an additional language is very effective, enabling them to make good progress in line with their classmates. There are many instances where pupils make rapid progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher, the governors and the senior team have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and clearly demonstrate good capacity to improve the school further. The headteacher provides skilful leadership and there is a strong emphasis upon raising standards. Subject and key stage leaders are developing their ability, using assessment data, to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum and to gauge the success of the numerous interventions for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those pupils for whom English is an additional language. Further developing this monitoring has been correctly identified as an area for improvement by the school. The school's senior leadership team effectively monitors the quality of provision within each subject and phase and sets challenging targets for improvement. The headteacher receives good support from the governors. The governors ensure that their statutory duties are fully met, which results in the pupils being safe and all treated equally. Closer links with subject leaders have resulted in increased accountability. The school's work to promote community cohesion is effective. The vast majority of parents agree. One parent commented that 'the school has a strong community feel and there is a wonderful cultural aspect that the school embraces'. The school actively promotes excellent partnerships with support organisations and with parents.

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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?	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?	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?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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

<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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

## The quality of provision

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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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?	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**

30 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary Magdalen Catholic Primary School, Brighton BN13EF

Thank you for such a warm and caring welcome to your school yesterday and for helping us during the inspection. Yours is a good school. You are clearly very happy and you are well supported by all of your teachers and other adults in the school. We were very impressed by your behaviour and by the excellent way you support one another.

Here are some of the strong features we found.

- The teachers plan and provide interesting lessons that enable you to enjoy learning and make good progress as you move through the school.
- Your behaviour and attitudes are excellent, which helps you to learn.
- Pupils in Nursery and Reception get off to a good start.
- All adults in the school take good care of you by making sure that you are safe.
- The school makes sure that all children from whatever background get all the support they need, especially those children who are new to the country and only just starting to speak English.
- It is clear that you know how to eat healthily and lead healthy lifestyles.

The school runs smoothly and there are some very colourful displays. The headteacher, her staff and the governors make a very good team. They know what the school needs to do to improve and how well it is doing. We have asked them to work on two things to make the school even better.

- Help the teachers to set you targets and to explain more clearly what you have to do to improve.
- To work with the teachers who look after each subject to help them to plan and develop a better understanding of how well you are doing.

You can help make these things happen by continuing to help one another by working hard.

Yours faithfully

Ken Bryan

Lead inspector