

St Mary's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131418
Local Authority	Brent
Inspection number	328588
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Bernice Magson

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 aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	328
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	Mr Reg Dozie
Headteacher	Mr Alphonsus Reilly
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Canterbury Road Kilburn London NW6 5ST
Telephone number	020 7624 1830
Fax number	020 7372 4932

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's is a large Catholic primary school serving a diverse community in which the majority of pupils are Black Caribbean and African, and the remainder mostly White British, Eastern European or of Asian minority ethnic heritage. Well above average proportions of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. These include behavioural, emotional and social needs; communication and language difficulties; and moderate and severe learning difficulties. The school has provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery and two Reception classes. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the customary times of the year is higher than is usually found. Extended services are provided on the same site, including family learning programmes.

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 in which pupils achieve well and reach above-average standards by the end of Year 6. The school's strong Catholic ethos is reflected in the outstanding and harmonious relationships between pupils and adults. Central to the school's philosophy is the belief that 'We are one, no matter where we're from', which pupils identify as a school rule. Indeed, in this inclusive community, pupils cooperate extremely well with one another and show outstanding respect for the beliefs and values of others. Personal development, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, are outstanding. Community cohesion is promoted extremely well and partnerships with parents, schools and outside agencies enhance opportunities for learning very effectively.

Pupils enjoy school very much. Behaviour is outstanding and they are polite and well-mannered to visitors. Pupils say they feel safe and secure because of the outstanding pastoral care and support of staff. Pupils recognise their place in the school community, locally and in the wider world, and make an excellent contribution to supporting others. Members of the school council are justly proud of their contributions to develop the school and say their views are valued, such as in the planned upgrading of the building. Good knowledge of basic skills and clear enjoyment of learning are preparing pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Pupils make good progress across the school because of the good quality of the teaching and the curriculum. Standards are improving over time in English, mathematics and science. Staff set challenging targets for pupils to attain and progress is rigorously analysed and perceived weaknesses effectively addressed. The individual needs of pupils are identified early and actions taken to promote their personal and academic development are swiftly implemented. A strong focus of the teaching is the emphasis on the acquisition of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). The school has identified the need to make greater use of assessment in Years 1 and 2 to ensure that tasks are appropriately matched to ability. Nevertheless, from low starting points on entry, pupils attain broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by Year 2, and a higher proportion of pupils than that found nationally attain the higher levels in mathematics and science by Year 6. In English, test results are maintained at an above-average level.

The school has good clarity in its vision and aims. It is ably and effectively led by an experienced team consisting of the headteacher and the deputy and assistant headteachers. Together with staff and governors, they are achieving good improvement in provision and raising standards. The development of a family centre is promoting highly effective links with families, raising expectations and improving levels of attendance, which is satisfactory. Good self-evaluation ensures that senior managers and governors identify the school's strengths accurately and develop strategies to overcome any weaknesses. The need to improve outdoor provision and learning has been identified for the Early Years Foundation Stage, although steps to bring about improvement are not yet fully in place. Subject coordinators use their expertise well to raise standards. For example, improved resources and better learning opportunities have resulted in pupils gaining skills in, and a good knowledge of, ICT. A successful scheme in Year 3 enables pupils to take laptops home, and parents say these are effective in engaging children in learning. The school's proven track record in improving provision and raising standards shows that it has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enjoy going to school and say that 'it is fun to play with friends'. Parents appreciate the close links established between school and home, which enable their children to feel safe and secure. Staff are friendly and welcoming, identifying the pastoral needs of children early and providing good support. The environment is spacious, bright and colourful, with a range of good-quality resources. Children are eager to learn because activities are planned well to interest and challenge them. In classrooms, there is a good balance of adult-led activities and child-initiated play. The school has identified the need to improve outdoor learning experiences, as most activities are focused on the development of physical skills and there are few opportunities to challenge children in other areas of learning. On entry to the Nursery, children have a wide spread of abilities, although the majority have low starting points, particularly in social and emotional skills and in communication and language. Teamwork among staff is effective in tracking their progress and using the information to provide meaningful learning experiences for each child. Achievements are celebrated well, shared with other children and parents, and recorded comprehensively in the child's learning profile. As a result, children achieve well in their personal development and reach standards close to expected levels for their age by the end of the Reception Year. Progress is good in other areas of learning, although standards are well below expected levels by the age of five, with weaknesses in early reading and writing skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, develop the range and quality of outdoor learning experiences in order to challenge children better in their learning.
- Make greater use of assessment to improve the challenge in learning tasks in Years 1 and 2, particularly for more able pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are improving and are above average by Year 6. This is because of better teaching, more rigorous assessment of progress and effective use of additional strategies to raise standards. In the latest Year 6 national tests, the higher level was attained by most pupils in science and by almost half of all pupils in mathematics. Standards are improving in English, but less rapidly, and strategies to raise attainment in writing are not yet embedded. By Year 2, standards are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers make insufficient use of assessment data in planning lessons and, as a result, learning tasks have a limited challenge, particularly for the more able pupils. A more practically based curriculum has been introduced in Year 2 to encourage boys more in learning and there are early signs of improved standards. Plans are in place to extend this initiative to Year 1. There have been recent improvements in pupils' standards in ICT across the school. Year 6 pupils are now composing, researching and recording competently and independently; Year 5 pupils are competent in making video recordings; and younger pupils use digital photographs as a stimulus for their work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children develop excellent relationships with staff and with their peers. In a caring Catholic ethos, pupils show excellent attitudes to learning and make outstanding progress in their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Behaviour is excellent in lessons, at lunchtimes and in the playground. Pupils work together extremely well and take good care of each other. They know staff will help them with and will resolve any problems. Some pupils succeed better at informal times by attending the lunch club in which they play together safely and with adult help. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles, enjoying, in particular, the range of out-of-school sporting activities. Pupils' contributions to the school and community are excellent, and include regular collection for a range of charities, such as the Rwanda Appeal. The school council has been involved in the purchase of additional playground equipment. The development of excellent social skills and good basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are contributing well to pupils' future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is of a good quality overall and is outstanding in Years 5 and 6. In the best lessons, teachers have excellent subject knowledge and give clear guidance to pupils regarding the criteria of good achievement and the best steps to take to achieve success. In most lessons, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their learning. Teachers use interesting activities to engage pupils, such as drama and visits. A variety of teaching methods maintain their good levels of concentration. Pupils are expected to make independent choices, and work together cooperatively. They express their ideas confidently and, through skilful questioning, new opinions emerge. In an outstanding lesson on poetry appreciation, Year 5 made excellent progress in identifying differences in cultural and conversational poetic styles as they discussed the modern Jamaican poems of Benjamin Zephaniah and compared them with poems by Walter de la Mare. In some Year 1 and 2 lessons teachers' expectations are too low and tasks such as worksheets don't always challenge, particularly the more able pupils, this limits the pace of learning. Teaching assistants are deployed well in English and mathematics in support of pupils with individual learning needs and/or disabilities or who are learning English as an additional language.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is a good curriculum, which is broad and balanced and available to all children. A cross-curricular approach is developing in which pupils are introduced to a good range of practical experiences to extend their basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. For example, Year 2 has explored and enjoyed the topic of dinosaurs, making good links with geography, ICT, mathematics and English. The curriculum has an appropriate emphasis on creative skills, such as drama and music, and sporting activities. For example, all pupils in Years 3 and 4 learn to read music by playing the recorder, and in Year 5 they receive regular swimming lessons. The curriculum is enriched effectively by visits and visitors which provide opportunities for learning in greater depth. On a visit to a local park, Year 1 pupils made tally charts as part of a traffic survey, using a recently learnt mathematical concept in a practical situation. Special

events further enhance learning, such as Science Week and a residential visit. Many pupils greatly enjoy the wide range of out-of-school activities that are available, such as Gaelic football, although most clubs are not open to younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 or Reception.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are strengths of the school and are outstanding. Staff know pupils' needs extremely well and generally provide an extensive range of additional support, both curricular and pastoral, in order to maximise pupils' learning. Central to the excellent pastoral support are the family liaison officers and teaching assistants who make a major contribution in supporting vulnerable pupils and their parents. There is regular monitoring of attendance and punctuality. Senior managers work hard with a small minority of families who find regular attendance more difficult. The school undertakes a rigorous assessment of pupils' progress, which provides the senior management team and subject coordinators with detailed information about the progress of individuals and the impact of strategies to raise attainment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, leadership team and governors meet regularly to review the school's performance and set challenging targets for improvement. Responsibilities are shared extremely well, for example in developing rigorous systems of assessment and monitoring attendance. Subject leaders give valuable support in the scrutiny of learning, and provide good guidance to overcome the identified areas for development. A key aim is to promote and evaluate the impact of community cohesion, which is outstanding. Many activities are organised to celebrate the rich heritage of this diverse community and to create external links, such as with schools in Essex, Africa and China. Recently, the school community of pupils, staff, parents and governors joined together very successfully to create a large and colourful mosaic representing all aspects of school life, which is displayed over the entrance of the school. Partnerships with colleges and other institutions are excellent, providing many opportunities for the professional development of staff and, increasingly, of parents. School finances are managed well. A considerable underspend is targeted to ensure improvements to the building, particularly for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the toilet facilities.

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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?	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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	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?	1

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	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?	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**

14 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's RC Primary School, London, NW6 5ST

You may recall that three inspectors visited your school recently. We had a lovely time and would like to thank you all for being so friendly and welcoming. We enjoyed talking to you and finding out about all the interesting things you are doing. You go to a good school.

Here are the best things about your school.

- You are very friendly and welcoming.
- You work hard in lessons and achieve well.
- You understand the importance of eating healthily and taking exercise.
- Visits out of school sound very exciting, such as to the Isle of Wight or Legoland.
- You make an excellent contribution in support of others in school, in the community and in Africa.
- There are lots of activities for you to do out of school.
- Your parents and carers are very glad that you go to this school.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors are working very hard to make your school even better.

There are two things that we would like your school to do to improve.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, we have asked that children be provided with a more interesting range of toys to play with outdoors.
- In Years 1 and 2, we would like the teachers to provide you, particularly the more able pupils, with tasks that challenge you more, in your reading, writing and mathematics.

We hope that you carry on enjoying the interesting things provided for you at St Mary's.

Yours faithfully

Bernice Magson

Lead Inspector