

# St Mary's Catholic Primary and Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121144
<b>Local Authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	329642
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Tricia Pritchard HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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)	188
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>	Mrs Rosemary Barker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr P George
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 June 2008
<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>	East Anglian Way Gorleston Great Yarmouth Norfolk NR31 6QY

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 November 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	329642

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary and Nursery School serves two Catholic parishes in Great Yarmouth and Gorleston. The Nursery has places for 26 children but currently, there are 14 children on roll. Many pupils travel a considerable distance to school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and the proportion of pupils with additional learning needs are below the national average. There are more pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and with English as an additional language than in other schools nationally. The school is a member of the Great Yarmouth Excellence Cluster, which replaced the Education Action Zone in 2005.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

St Mary's Catholic Primary and Nursery School offers a satisfactory education for its pupils and is an improving school. In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Pupils are making better progress than at the time of the last inspection. This is because teaching has improved and leadership is stronger. The 2008 performance data, particularly for Year 6 pupils, shows a marked improvement on the previous two years. Overall, standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly in line with the national average across the whole school. Nevertheless, the English results are not as good as they could be because pupils do not do as well in writing as they do in reading. Boys, especially, do not attain high enough scores in writing. Teachers' marking of writing is mostly good but, in some classes, teachers are not providing pupils with enough opportunities to write independently in other subjects, such as in science and history, and this is restricting their progress.

New staffing arrangements have led to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. There is still some inconsistency between classes but much less than before. Overall, teaching is satisfactory with good features. Teachers are setting tasks, which are matched to most pupils' abilities. The exception is provision for higher attaining pupils. Sometimes these pupils are not challenged enough, particularly through teachers' questioning during the first part of lessons, and this is a factor in their underperformance.

Pupils want to learn. They are well behaved and relationships are good. A happy team ethos pervades the school. Pupils learn in a calm and well ordered environment. The presentation of their work has improved significantly in the last six months so that they now take a pride in their work. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support groups of pupils. They are well trained and proficient at guiding pupils with English as an additional language. Consequently, these pupils learn English quickly and do well in comparison to pupils with similar language and learning needs in other schools.

The school is benefiting from clear direction and a concerted drive to raise standards. The headteacher and leadership team are monitoring teaching rigorously and using the outcomes effectively to inform staff development. They have made a good start on analysing data in order to monitor standards although there is scope for interrogating the data even more to evaluate how different groups of pupils are doing and especially boys and higher attaining pupils. Governance is good. The headteacher and governors have made key strategic decisions about staff deployment and the future leadership of the school, which have been instrumental in moving the school forward. Rapid progress has been made in the last six months. The school offers satisfactory value for money. It has demonstrated a track record of improvement and has good capacity to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Children enter the Nursery class in line with age-related expectations in most areas of learning. The exception is their language skills where there is more variability. Some children's speech skills are in the early stages of development and others are more advanced. Throughout the

Nursery and Reception classes, they make satisfactory progress so that by the time they enter Year 1, most are working within the early learning goals. Teaching is satisfactory with good features. Planning is thorough. A strong emphasis is placed on teaching phonics and on planning learning through structured play but insufficient use is made of the outdoor learning environment. This is especially the case in the Reception class where there is no direct access to an outdoor learning area. This restricts the progress of children who would otherwise learn better in that environment and especially of the boys, who enjoy the freedom of a bigger learning space outdoors. Children enjoy their work. They know much about healthy foods and say they feel safe and secure. Leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory.

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

- Raise standards in writing across the school and particularly accelerate boys' progress in writing.
- Provide more challenge for higher attaining pupils.
- Conduct a sharper analysis of data in order to identify precisely what it is that different groups of pupils need to work on to improve their progress.
- Provide more outdoor learning opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

During the last year, pupils throughout the school have been making faster progress than previously. This improvement can be seen in the results at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2008. Year 2 pupils did better in reading than in the previous two years. Their scores in all subjects have improved since 2006 and are now in line with the national average for the school's context. They would have been higher if more pupils had attained higher levels in every subject and if boys had done better in writing. There was too wide a gap between boys' attainment in reading and writing. Pupils with English as an additional language did well in comparison to those in other schools.

Year 6 pupils did considerably better in 2008 in their end of key stage assessment tasks than in 2007. In particular, their scores in mathematics were above the national average of 2007 and their science results were near to the national average. In English, their scores were slightly below the national average of 2007, but overall they were satisfactory. There was a discrepancy between pupils' performance in reading and writing; writing was weak in comparison to reading. In line with the pattern in Key Stage 1, girls did much better in reading and writing than boys and there were fewer higher attaining pupils in English.

In the lessons observed during the inspection visit, most pupils were making satisfactory progress. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 make the fastest progress.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance has improved and is now broadly in line with the national average. Behaviour is good and pupils cooperate very well with one another from a

very early age. As a result, incidents of disruption are rare. Their attitudes to learning are mainly positive.

Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles. They understand which foods are good for them as well as those that are not and they appreciate the value of exercise. They are keen to walk to school if they can. Pupils feel safe and are confident that adults will help them if needed.

The school council has coordinated fund raising very effectively. Pupils have raised significant amounts of money to improve their school environment. For example, they provided the funding for the exercise equipment on the playing field. Pupils' moral and spiritual development is good and is aided by assemblies, where values of care and consideration are very well communicated. This helps to make St Mary's a pleasant place for learning. Pupils share and shoulder social responsibilities as they grow older. Year 6 pupils take their duties seriously. In turn, their self-confidence is boosted as they play a valuable part in ensuring that the school is a happy and well-organised place to learn. The pupils make a positive contribution to the community. Their basic skills in numeracy and literacy are equipping them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

There have been significant staff changes this term with a new appointment in Year 6 and different staffing arrangements in the two job share classes. These have contributed to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Overall, teaching is satisfactory with good features. It is best in Year 5 and Year 6, where it is consistently good. In these classes, teachers maintain a brisk pace throughout a whole lesson. In other classes, the pace sometimes flags particularly when the whole class is taught together.

Teachers adopt a common approach to planning and ensure that lesson objectives are shared with pupils at the beginning of each session. A satisfactory start has been made with assessing and tracking pupils' progress and attainment at key points each term. Teachers are using the outcomes well to target pupils at risk of underperforming. Presentation of pupils' work has improved considerably in the last six months. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and there is more evidence in pupils' books, especially in mathematics, of pupils being set tasks which are matched to their needs and abilities. However, not all teachers challenge the thinking of the most able pupils sufficiently through targeted questioning. In some classes, teachers ask too many questions, which require just a one-word answer instead of questions to develop pupils' reasoning skills.

Teachers have welcomed the introduction of interactive whiteboards but as yet, not all use them fully to support teaching and learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is enhanced by a range of after-school activities, outside visits and visiting speakers. The choir, in particular, has achieved considerable success in competitions and this has raised the profile of singing in the school. Effective links have been established with a secondary school to provide lessons in modern foreign languages.

Community cohesion is promoted well locally through the curriculum. The school has recognised that the curriculum now needs to be extended further to include developing international links.

A strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills through the daily teaching of English and mathematics. In some classes, pupils also have well planned opportunities to practise their writing skills in religious education, science, history and geography. Pupils in other classes, however, are using too many worksheets in these subjects, which offer limited scope for developing their independent writing skills.

The school makes effective use of the available computers but there are not enough to enable pupils to practise and apply their skills on a regular basis.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

All the staff take the welfare of pupils very seriously. They are committed to promoting their well-being and building their self-esteem. Staffing ratios are good. The transition from Nursery to school is managed well. Statutory requirements for pupils' safety are fully in place. Procedures to keep bullying and racism in check are communicated well to pupils, who know what to do if they experience a problem.

Academic guidance has improved considerably since the last inspection. Marking of work is often a good feature and provides pupils with advice about how to improve their work. In the case of pupils who find learning harder than others, there are much better systems for identifying their needs successfully than before. All pupils are set precise targets and these are reviewed at regular intervals. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with English as an additional language and for pupils with additional learning needs. Able pupils, however, receive too infrequent targeted support.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is well led and managed. This marks a considerable improvement since the last inspection. The acting headteacher provides clear direction and is enabling the senior management team to take greater responsibility for monitoring teaching and learning. For example, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and Key Stage 1 leader conduct a weekly scrutiny of pupils' books and give frank and honest feedback to staff on their findings. They work together well as a team. Leaders have made a good start on analysing pupil performance data. There is scope now to extend this analysis further to include an evaluation of how different groups of pupils are performing and also to share the analysis with staff.

A culture of self-evaluation has become embedded. There is less reliance on the local authority to evaluate provision and more confidence in the leadership team's and governors' ability to monitor provision and drive improvement. Governance is good. Governors know the school well. The school improvement and development plan identifies pertinent objectives and measurable targets. For example, an ambitious target of 90% of teaching to be judged good or better by July 2009 has been set. Communication with parents is good. Parents are well informed about their children's progress and about school events.



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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?	3
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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

<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>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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	3
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?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

20 November 2008

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary and Nursery School

Thank you for welcoming me, Mr Paull and Mr Moodie, who came with us, when we visited your school this week. We enjoyed talking to you and joining you in lessons.

I have been to your school several times during the last year. This time, it was so good to see how much progress that you have made since my last visit six months ago. We were pleased to see that your work in books was better presented and that marking was helping you to improve. We discussed standards with your teachers and particularly looked at how well you were doing in reading, writing and mathematics. Throughout the school, standards are higher than they were two years ago. However, we still feel that you need to have more opportunities to practise your writing and we have discussed this with your teachers. Boys, especially, are not doing as well in writing as in reading so we want to encourage the boys to really concentrate hard on improving their writing.

Several of you come from different countries and join the school with little English. We were impressed how quickly you learn English and with your progress. Some of you find learning in some subjects difficult and we know that you appreciate the extra help you receive from teaching assistants. Those of you who find learning easier sometimes need to be set harder work so we have discussed this with your teachers too.

Your school is well led by Mr George, the senior management team and the governors. The staff work together well to plan lessons which interest you and which help you to make progress. Your behaviour in lessons and in the playground is good. Those of you in the Nursery and Reception classes have lots of lovely equipment indoors to help you with your learning. We have suggested that you go outside a bit more not only at playtime but during lesson time too.

I shall not be coming on my termly visits any more. I have enjoyed getting to know you and your teachers. Your school has good plans for the future. Good luck and enjoy the rest of term!

Best wishes

Tricia Pritchard

Her Majesty's Inspector