

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121637
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	331414
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2008
Reporting inspector	James Kilner, HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Bryant
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Wray
Date of previous school inspection	February 2006
School address	Tentergate Road Knaresborough North Yorkshire HG5 9BG
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, and held meetings with groups of pupils, members of staff, the coordinator for special educational needs (SENCO), the chair of governors and the headteacher. They looked at: the current school development plan, systems and data for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress, and information on lesson observations conducted by members of the senior leadership team. They analysed 55 parental questionnaires.

The inspection looked in detail at the following:

- how well pupils achieve and their attainment
- the quality of teaching and learning
- relationships with parents and others
- leadership and management across all areas of the school
- pupils' behaviour and how they enjoy their learning
- provision for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School provides a Catholic education for children from Knaresborough and the surrounding area. The proportion of girls in the school is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils from the Traveller community is rising because of the school's good reputation for inclusion of minority groups. The school has received a number of local and national awards including Investors in People and The Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark.

Further information about the school

	School's Figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	203	Below average
Free school meals	4.0	Below average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	13.1	Below average
Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups	8.8	Below average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	0.6	Below average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	2.0	Above average

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Mary's Catholic Primary is a good school with outstanding features. Its most notable strengths are:

- pupils' enjoyment of their time in the school and their behaviour
- the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- the support, guidance and care for pupils
- the partnership with parents and others in its community

Pupils' achievement is good, particularly at Key Stage 2 where a number of outcomes are outstanding. At Key Stage 1, pupils' education has been unsettled by an unusually high number of maternity leaves in the last two years. Strong and purposeful leadership has now halted the decline in achievement at Key Stage 1. Governors and school leaders have put in place strategies which have led to much greater consistency in allocating teachers to classes. The school has shown good capacity to improve and is on an upward trend but teaching, the curriculum, assessment and academic guidance are currently good overall rather than outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and achievement throughout school, particularly at Key Stage 1 in English.
- Improve assessment and planning systems throughout school by ensuring:
 - the consistent use of marking which clearly indicates to pupils how to improve their work linked to their individual targets
 - increased frequency and efficiency of data scrutiny by all staff so that any emerging gaps in performance are identified and quickly remedied.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

2

Pupils' learning and the progress they make are good. They enter the Reception class with a level of skills which are broadly typical for their age and make good progress. Progress through Key Stage 1 varies. Although attainment was exceptionally high in 2004 it has declined over the years to only average levels. The school has done much to halt this decline and all pupils now achieve satisfactorily or better in all subjects by the end of Key Stage 1. Although still variable, progress quickens through Key Stage 2 so that pupils consistently attain high standards which are significantly above those achieved nationally. Unvalidated results for 2008 indicate that this trend is likely to continue. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, and pupils from the Traveller community all make good progress and achieve well.

Pupils are extremely well behaved and care exceptionally well for each other. The school is a happy and sociable place.

- Relationships with all adults are exemplary.
- Pupils feel safe in school and know who to turn to if they feel at all concerned or upset.
- The school council ensures that ideas to improve the school are carefully and seriously considered.
- Popular extra-curricular provision featuring physical, artistic and musical activities are well attended.
- Pupils from the Traveller community, with support from their parents and the school, have improved their rates of attendance, resulting in their much improved levels of attainment and progress.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding and pupils make an excellent contribution to their immediate community. The school has received many accolades both locally and nationally for this contribution, for example from 'Yorkshire in Bloom' for their horticultural skills. Their generosity of spirit extends across the world, raising funds and forging partnerships with communities facing hardship and famine.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

The quality of the school's work

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Features of particularly successful lessons, in some of which the teaching was outstanding, were:

- high expectations and teachers' good subject knowledge
- consistently good pace ensuring good rates of progress
- skilled teaching assistants effectively supporting pupils' learning
- good quality information and communication technology equipment used effectively by pupils and teachers.

On occasions, lesson planning is not as specific as it could be to match the individual needs of some pupils. There is not yet consistent practice in marking pupils' work so there are times when pupils are unsure how to move to the next level.

In the past, the good range of assessment information on pupils' progress had not been used by teachers effectively to monitor how well their pupils were achieving. Consequently, the seriousness of gaps in pupils' learning, particularly in Key Stage 1, was not recognised. Senior leaders in the school have now developed a much more effective tracking system, recording assessment information and allowing emerging gaps to be easily detected. However, currently, not all teachers make full and frequent use of the information.

Recent adaptations to the curriculum ensure that pupils have the opportunity to use their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects. The woodland outside classroom provides a great opportunity for pupils to explore the natural world.

Support, guidance and care for pupils are exemplary. This is truly an inclusive school where the pastoral, welfare and health needs of individuals are consistently met. As a result, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from minority communities flourish academically and socially.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership to the school. Developments under her guidance include:

- the recent extension of the senior leadership team to ensure that evaluation systems are more firmly embedded into the routine life of the school
- subject leaders assisting better in the drive to raise standards through monitoring the work of colleagues by observing lessons, tracking performance in different subjects and scrutinising pupils' work.

The management of special educational needs is exemplary. Robust systems and regular reviews of support ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those pupils with a statement of special educational need are well supported and make good progress to achieve well.

Governors hold the school to good account. They are knowledgeable in their interpretation of school and national data and an appropriate range of committees meets regularly and reports back to the full governing body.

A strong sense of justice drives the school leaders and governors in their commitment to equal opportunities and good race relations. Consequently, there is a strong community spirit, tangible in the ethos of the school. All statutory responsibilities in regard to safeguarding children are met.

Strong partnerships with parents and highly effective links with outside agencies ensure that the inclusive nature of the school is a key strength. Parents feel welcome in school and know that any concerns they have will be dealt with. Through their high profile in the local community and wider diocese, the school does much to ensure that community cohesion is a priority. The school has plans to extend pupils' understanding through links with schools serving more diverse communities. The school achieves good value for money as demonstrated in the recent arrangements and tendering for the classroom extensions.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision is good. On entry to the school's Reception class (Foundation Stage 2) children have skills and abilities which are generally typical for their age, although some are below in language and personal development. Through effective practice and good quality learning opportunities children make good progress, particularly in their social and emotional skills and in their communication, language and literacy skills. Key workers in the setting ensure that children settle quickly; a programme of regular and accurate assessments ensure that planned activities and learning opportunities are matched well to children's developing abilities. Good relationships and strong links between home and school ensure that children grow in their confidence in social situations and increasingly take charge of their own learning. There is an appropriate balance between adult- and child-led activities with children able to persevere with investigations for some time, for example when drawing patterns using shapes in the outside area. Children are confident when using new technology, taking turns and praising one another's efforts when using the touch screen interactive whiteboard to complete complex shape sequences. The wooded area outdoor classroom provides an exciting and safe environment for children to explore the natural world, collaborating well to select natural objects to make a large patchwork quilt. While the immediate outdoor area provides a good opportunity to further develop learning begun indoors, there is limited space and little provision to use large wheeled equipment. Building development due for completion in September 2009 is designed to solve this problem. Management of the EYFS is good. A strong team works effectively together in order that children are safe, secure and make good progress.

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 the children in the EYFS promoted?*	2
How effectively is the provision in the EYFS led and managed?*	2

* Common judgements made across all inspections of the EYFS

Views of parents and carers

The great majority of parents are very supportive of the school and its work. They particularly appreciate the welcoming and approachable staff and their availability at the beginning of the school day in 'Welcoming Time'. They feel that the staff take very good care of their children and that the older pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their next stage of education. Those parents whose children are new to the school commented on the 'fantastic staff' and how well their children have been welcomed into the school.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.

18 November 2008



Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Knaresborough, HG5 9BG

Thank you so much for the very warm and friendly welcome that you gave Mrs Gregory, Mrs Clarke and me when we inspected your school last week. We enjoyed meeting you and finding out all about your school.

St Mary's is a good school. Some things are excellent, such as your behaviour and the way in which the school cares for you and guides you.

- Mrs Wray and the governors lead the school well and are always wanting to find ways to make your school even better.
- All your lessons are good and sometimes they are outstanding. The teachers know a lot about the different subjects and all of you are good when it comes to using computers and whiteboards in your learning.
- Everyone is fully included in your school and everyone gets on really well with one another.
- You make good progress in your time at the school and attain high standards, especially in the Key Stage 2 tests.

To make your school even better, we have asked Mrs Wray, the governors and staff to help everyone to achieve even better, particularly at Key Stage 1 in English, by:

- making sure that when your teachers mark your work they give you more guidance in how to improve
- asking the teachers to check more often how well you are doing so that more help can be given if you need it.

You are such conscientious and hard-working children that I know you will all do your bit to make your school even better.

Yours sincerely

James Kilner

Her Majesty's Inspector

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