

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106240
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	336641
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2010
Reporting inspector	David Scott

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr O O'Doherty
Headteacher	Mr Jon Murray
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors spent seven hours looking at learning; visited 19 part-lessons; observed all seven class teachers; and had meetings with the chair of governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation documentation, monitoring and assessment information, lesson plans, school policies and analysed 135 parental and 110 pupil questionnaires. The school's safeguarding procedures were also evaluated.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of the quality of learning in lessons on pupils' attainment
- how well the school is using assessment data to secure improvement for all groups of pupils
- the provision for more able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the impact of leaders and managers, at all levels, on driving improvements across all key stages.

Information about the school

St Mary's Catholic Primary is an average-sized school. Almost one in ten of the pupils are eligible for a free school meal which is below the national average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage with only a few being from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language is well below average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, the largest group being those with moderate learning difficulties.

The Early Years Foundation Stage provision has one Reception class. Children join Reception from a wide variety of pre-school settings.

During the recent past the school has experienced difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, but staffing is now stable. The school moved into a new state-of-the-art building on the same site in January 2010.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a satisfactory school but one that is improving under the very positive leadership of the headteacher. He is enthusiastically supported by his senior team and sound governing body. The school has good links with the local community, particularly with its neighbouring special and partner secondary schools, and the local church. The school instils in its pupils a sense of purpose and self-belief; as one pupil said, 'St Mary's is an amazing school that treats everyone equally like a big happy family. Teachers do a really good job and I love the new school.'

In this welcoming, harmonious community, pupils are happy, feel safe, behave well and are respectful of the views of each other. They have a good appreciation as to what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and the benefits of healthy eating and participation in sporting activities. The partnership with parents and other agencies is strong and underpins and supports the school's good levels of care, guidance and support. As a parent commented, 'I could not have asked for a better, more complete education for my child.'

Pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve average standards by the end of Year 6. The school strives to eradicate any differences in the achievement of groups of pupils. Despite this strong focus, the school has not yet managed to ensure more able pupils achieve consistently well, particularly in mathematics and science. Boys perform less well than girls, especially in writing.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some lessons being good. There are examples of good assessment practice, but the quality across the school is variable, and as a result, activities are not always closely matched to pupils' varied needs. Also, teachers do not consistently identify ways to improve pupils' work. Despite a stimulating curriculum, effective care and support and good provision in Early Years Foundation Stage, not all pupils attend regularly. Attendance is rising, but strategies to improve it have not been entirely successful with all families.

Information on pupils' progress is accurately captured and tracked. Nevertheless, analysis is not always sufficiently robust to ensure that all pupils improve their progress at a faster rate. Some leaders are new to their responsibilities and the school recognises that further coaching will be needed, to help all staff become more effective in raising standards. Self-evaluation is honest and generally accurate. The changes in staffing and the move to the new school have been managed well. These together with reduced exclusions, improved attendance and a stimulating curriculum demonstrate that the school has satisfactory capacity to make further improvements.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Over the next term improve the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make, so that they are consistently good, by:
 - ensuring teachers use day-to-day assessments to provide activities that are challenging and are carefully matched to the varied needs of all pupils
 - asking probing questions in lessons which give pupils opportunities to develop and explain their ideas fully, especially for more able pupils
 - setting and reviewing targets more systematically with pupils so they clearly understand how to improve.
- By the end of the academic year raise standards in mathematics and science, particularly for boys, by:
 - ensuring that tracking and monitoring information is analysed robustly by setting quantifiable measures against which to evaluate success
 - distributing the leadership of the school even more widely by extending the capacity of middle leaders and governors to manage their areas of responsibility through coaching and training
 - working more closely with families to improve attendance to ensure they appreciate the impact of poor attendance on their children's learning and progress.
- About 40% of the school's whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The quality of learning and progress in lessons is satisfactory. Pupils behave well and mature into polite, thoughtful and considerate young people. The overwhelming majority of pupils are enthusiastic about their tasks and respond appropriately to teachers' requests. In a Year 5 numeracy lesson, all pupils, including boys participated well in investigating how to draw the net of a 3D shape using models they had made from interlocking plastic shapes. Year 2, for example, thoroughly enjoyed their numeracy/science lesson when they traced the outline of their hands on squared-paper, cut the shape out and measured the length, width and area in order to practise their calculation methods and improve their investigation skills.

Standards of work and results in national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2009, were average but variable; boys underperformed in all areas and higher attainers did less well in science and mathematics than they did in writing. Able pupils in Key Stage 1, however, did better in writing than in reading and mathematics. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily. Analysis of the school's own data show that current Year 6 pupils are on track to meet their challenging targets in English and that progress is accelerating. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do as well as their peers

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because of the high levels of very effective support they receive, as do those who join the school with little English.

Pupils get on well together and are keen to engage in the many opportunities to take on responsibilities. They are proud to be school council members because they were elected following 'real-life' election procedures and have participated in joint projects with pupils from the neighbouring special school. Pupils are aware of the world of work and most are soundly prepared for their futures. Pupils gain first-hand experience of growing flowers, fruit and vegetables as well as of recycling. The school has effective strategies that emphasise the importance of good attendance. These efforts have had a fair measure of success and have succeeded in raising the pupils' attendance which is average. Nevertheless, not all parents and carers have fully appreciated the detrimental effect taking time out of school for holidays or non-urgent appointments has on their child's learning.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and they understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and participating in sporting activities. The school provides many opportunities for quiet reflection in class and assemblies to explore and appreciate different cultures which underpins their good spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. Above all, they enjoy learning; as one pupil said, 'I think St Mary's is a great place to be. All the teachers are really nice and look after us so well.'

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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How effective is the provision?

Classrooms are delightful, rich with imaginative activities and vibrant displays which capture and respond to pupils' interests and enthusiasms. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some lessons being good. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Subject knowledge is strong so that explanations are well structured and confident. New technology is used well to make the lessons interesting. Nevertheless, marking and target-setting do not always show pupils how they can improve their work, and questions are not always sufficiently probing, particularly for more able pupils. Occasionally teachers' explanations are too long which reduces the opportunity for pupils to think for themselves and explain their ideas so that progress slows down.

The well-planned curriculum meets the needs and interests of all learners. It is further enriched by exciting productions, pantomimes, multi-sports festivals and clubs ranging from French for infants to gardening. A wide range of trips and the annual residential visit to London for Year 6 provide good opportunities for pupils to broaden their personal and academic skills.

The school is rightly proud of its good care, guidance and support. The most vulnerable pupils benefit greatly from the highly effective work that the school carries out with external agencies. For example, the school has been very successful in helping some pupils with previously challenging behaviour to enjoy learning again and make expected progress. Staff can point to real successes in helping pupils overcome difficult histories and challenging episodes in their lives. 'The school has helped me to work on my own and made me more confident in myself', commented one pupil. The inclusion team provides a wide range of support to enable vulnerable pupils to play a full part in school life and is increasingly successful at engaging hard-to-reach families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Despite the many changes of staff in the recent past that have interrupted progress, the determination of the headteacher to improve the school is unwavering. This has been effectively shared with all staff. Weaker teaching has been tackled and there is a clear ambition to make sure that all lessons are good and that children achieve well.

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Consequently, teaching is satisfactory or better and progress and learning are beginning to accelerate. Nevertheless, due to staffing changes, leaders have undertaken additional roles and, although green shoots are beginning to emerge, it is still too early to see the full impact of new initiatives.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together to guide and support staff. They recognise that in order to raise standards, leadership roles across the school need to be more sharply focused on accelerating the rate of progress in all classes.

The school has a strong commitment to ensuring that every pupil has an equal chance to learn. Senior leaders guide staff so that equality of opportunity and inclusion are sound, but recognise that occasionally, although improving, the most able pupils and boys do not always do as well as other groups of learners. Governors are supportive of the school, fulfil their statutory duties and actively promote the partnerships between home, parish and school. Nevertheless, they are not sufficiently involved in evaluating the school's performance. They challenge well over such matters as site-security and financial management, but their challenge is not yet robust enough to secure more rapid improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. The school has comprehensive procedures for safeguarding and risk assessment. Systems to keep pupils safe meet all government guidelines and requirements. The school has evaluated its contribution to community cohesion, which is good. This has been achieved by developing and promoting a detailed understanding of its own community and the different faiths, ethnicities and cultures that exist within it. The school's international links promote good awareness of global issues, for example, through developing links with schools in the Gambia.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start in the Reception class. They settle in quickly and are keen to learn. Children play together and are well behaved. They enjoy learning in this busy environment. Data show that children's attainment when they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage is just below that which is expected for their age, being weaker in communication, language and thinking skills, particularly for boys. By the end of Reception, they attain levels that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. They make most gains in their language development because of the greater focus on linking letters and sounds and the use of role play. This was demonstrated in a good lesson when a group of children took the opportunity to use their improved language skills in a warm-up of musical statues followed by acting-out the story of 'Three little Pigs' to great effect.

Children enjoy a range of stimulating activities, indoors and out, carefully chosen to meet their needs and interests. They are given the opportunity to select their own learning activities and respond well to encouragement and praise to explore and widen their choices. Teaching is consistently good with motivating lessons moving at a good pace in a friendly and safe atmosphere.

Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. High levels of care and welfare are provided for the children to ensure their well-being. Support for vulnerable children is of a high standard. Partnerships with parents and external agencies are strong so that specialist help is sought and provided when needed. Teachers and helpers are perceptive and note down significant moments of each child's progress, but the leader acknowledges that staff need to ensure a higher degree of rigour to ensure consistency of observations. These records are used well to ensure that each child's learning is moved forward, with no stress. Smiles and gentleness abound in this place.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The school enjoys the support of the overwhelming majority of parents who returned questionnaires. Almost all respondents were very positive about the school and felt that it keeps pupils safe and helps them maintain a healthy lifestyle. They praised the exciting range of activities and high quality of support that staff provide. Inspectors

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agree totally with these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 135 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 204 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	60	51	38	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	95	70	40	30	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	50	37	73	54	10	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	60	44	70	52	4	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	67	50	62	46	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	68	50	62	46	3	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	61	45	71	53	3	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	58	43	69	51	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	61	45	72	53	2	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	69	51	55	41	9	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	56	41	76	56	2	1	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	77	57	57	42	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	81	60	52	39	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Dukinfield SK16 5LD

This letter is to thank you for welcoming us so warmly to your school and for taking the time from your breaks to talk to the inspectors. We really enjoyed meeting you and seeing you at work and play. Many of your parents wrote to say how pleased they were with the school, as one parent said, 'My Child is very settled and I wouldn't change anything about the school. It's perfect!' and another commented, 'I wish I was six so I could come back here again!' Inspectors agree.

We came to find out as much as we could about your school and now we would like to tell you what we said in the report we have written. We feel your school is satisfactory, meaning that it does some things well while other things could be better. Your headteacher and teachers make your school a very special and welcoming place. You and your parents told us that you like school and that it is a caring and happy place where you feel really safe. You are respectful, polite and considerate towards each other. We especially enjoyed your assembly about 'special people'.

Your headteacher and teachers are determined to help you succeed as are your parents. So we have asked them to:

- plan work that will challenge and engage you in all lessons, showing you ways to learn by yourselves, and particularly for the more able among you
- give you clearer advice on how to improve your work so that you can achieve your very best, especially boys in your numeracy and science skills
- make sure you all attend as well as possible. You and your family can help by not missing school by taking holidays or making non-urgent appointments in term time.

Once again, it was very good to meet you all. We wish you and the school all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Scott

Lead inspector

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