

St Monica's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110482
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	337513
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Marion Wallace

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	444
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Beckett
Headteacher	Peter Kennedy
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2010
School address	Currier Drive Milton Keynes MK14 6HB
Telephone number	01908 606966
Fax number	01908 608486
Email address	stmonicas@milton-keynes.go.uk

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2010
Inspection number	337513

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The vast majority of time was spent looking at learning: 16 teachers were seen, 23 lessons were observed, and meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of pupils, governors, and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its improvement plan and those of the subject departments, minutes of governors' meetings, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, a scrutiny of pupils' work and 177 parental and carer questionnaires were received and analysed.

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

- the impact of senior leaders in bringing about improvements in mathematics and science for more-able pupils at Key Stage 2
- how effectively teachers use assessment to support pupils' learning and help the pupils understand what they have to do to improve their work, especially at Key Stage 2 in mathematics and science
- how effectively the curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage is tailored to the needs of different groups.

Information about the school

The school is large for its type. Most pupils come from the town and the local area. The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language. Very few are in the early stages of learning English 28 different languages are spoken. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, as is that of those with a statement of special educational needs. In some year groups, the percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high. Mobility is also high in some year groups. A very small minority of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the Nursery and two Reception classes. The school provides a breakfast club and after-school club on site. This provision is not managed by the governing body and was not inspected by the team.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Monica's Catholic Primary is a good school. Parents and carers appreciate the strong family ethos, excellent quality care and enjoyable learning opportunities provided by the school. Its motto, 'Let Trust, Respect and Love live here', permeates the whole school and contributes significantly to the strong sense of common values underpinned by the positive, Catholic ethos. Pupils of different abilities achieve well. One parent/carer summed up the views of the vast majority saying, 'We appreciate the very strong commitment of all staff in supporting each child's personal, spiritual and academic development.' Parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities commented on the dramatic progress their children were making because of the extra tuition and help the pupils receive. Pupils were unanimous in their appreciation and support for their school. 'Brilliant, we really like it here, the teachers are very caring and helpful and they teach you a lot in lessons and help you improve your work,' was one comment.

These are the key strengths of the school:

- Pupils' progress is very good in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2.
- Achievement in English is a strength throughout the school and all groups of pupils reach standards that are well above average.
- Pupils and parents and carers appreciate the excellent relationships with the school.
- Care, guidance and support are outstanding, so that pupils behave extremely well and are sensible and enthusiastic learners.
- The quality of teaching is good and pupils develop a very positive attitude to their learning because lessons are enjoyable and extend learning well.
- The headteacher and senior management team lead the school effectively and have a clear vision for its future improvement.

There is a very strong commitment from all staff to provide each pupil with the best possible education. There is continual drive for improvement and the effective systems for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school play a successful part in improving standards. The school's good organisation and strong, shared vision demonstrate its good capacity to continue moving forward.

There are two key areas for improvement:

- Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to challenge more-able pupils fully in science and, consequently, these pupils do not achieve as well in science as they do in mathematics and English.
- Although provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving rapidly, there are missed opportunities for adults to challenge groups of children fully because

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

planning is less well developed than in the rest of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By April 2011, accelerate progress and raise standards in science for more-able pupils in Key Stage 2 by:
 - ensuring pupils know what level they are working at and how they can improve
 - using assessment in science more rigorously to ensure tasks and questions are matched to the needs of all pupils, especially the more-able
 - raising the profile of science in the school.
- By April 2011, improve the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring all teachers work together to plan consistently across all Early Years Foundation Stage classes.
 - refining current assessment systems and the use of assessment to inform planning so that all teachers plan tasks that are closely matched to the needs of children, especially the more able.
 - developing the role of the Early Years Foundation Stage co-ordinator.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils make good progress and enjoy learning because lessons are well planned and excellent relationships with staff contribute to a positive climate for learning. In a Year 5 literacy lesson, there was a buzz of excitement at the prospect of writing about a disastrous expedition inspired by Burke and Wells's trek across Australia. The pupils relished the teacher's challenge to use interesting words. Handwriting, presentation, spelling and punctuation are consistently well developed throughout the school. All pupils write confidently and enjoy using lively language to enrich their writing, for example, one pupil wrote, "Fuming, I stamped up the stairs."

Pupils say "Maths is really good and we are challenged to do our best but we sometimes get bored in science." More-able pupils do not make as much progress in science as they do in English and mathematics because they do not know what they have to do to reach the higher level. Achievement is good overall for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

These are the other key features of pupils' outcomes:

Pupils learn to make a very positive contribution to their school and local community. The school ethos encourages pupils to reflect, be thoughtful and understand the spiritual dimension extremely well.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Excellent attitudes and behaviour contribute to a positive climate for learning. Teaching is good overall; the large majority of lessons observed during the inspection were good and a few were outstanding. Teachers use assessment information well to plan work that matches the needs of all groups effectively. Occasionally, however, this is less effective for more-able older pupils in science, who are not always given more challenging work. Teachers use questions well to check pupils' knowledge and understanding and pupils enjoy well-planned opportunities to discuss their ideas with others. Pupils with additional needs are very well supported in class by teaching assistants and small groups so they make good progress. The quality of marking is inconsistent throughout the school. There are examples of excellent marking but also missed opportunities to challenge pupils to improve.

The curriculum is well planned and matched to the needs of all groups of pupils. The very strong personal and social education programme assists pupils' outstanding personal development. Pupils enjoy the curriculum and this contributes to their enthusiasm for learning. They said that they enjoy the trips and learn a lot from them. During a French trip, pupils were challenged to participate in outdoor, adventurous activities such as orienteering. The well-organised extra-curricular basketball sessions help pupils improve their coordination skills and competence. Literacy skills are reinforced well through other subjects such as history and geography. Information and communication technology is used satisfactorily to support learning in other subjects. The caring ethos results in very happy pupils who thoroughly enjoy school life. Pupils' needs are central to the work of the school and all adults effectively help children and

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

parents and carers to get the best from learning. The school works very effectively with external support agencies to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Induction and transition arrangements for children entering the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage, at other points during the school year and when moving on to other schools are excellent.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and all staff communicate drive and ambition effectively and they have a very thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The monitoring of pupils' progress throughout the school is good and highlights any areas of weakness, leading to improvement. The headteacher and leaders at all levels are dedicated to making sure all pupils and all staff achieve well.

The governing body monitor and evaluate the work of the school satisfactorily and are increasing the degree of challenge offered to ensure school improvement initiatives are successful. Tracking of pupils' progress over time is thorough and senior leaders quickly identify any dips and intervene with sensible strategies to promote improvement. The promotion of community cohesion is good. Pupils contribute very effectively to their own and local community. Senior leaders have sensible plans to strengthen their involvement with national and global communities. Child protection, risk assessment and safeguarding procedures meet current statutory requirements. All checks on adults are extremely robust. Equality of opportunity and elimination of discrimination are effective, as reflected in the profile of good achievement across different pupil groups.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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

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	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge below the levels expected for their age and a significant number have weaker communication, language and literacy skills. Children make satisfactory progress and their attainment is broadly average when they enter Year 1.

Expectations are clear and consequently children make good progress in their personal development, behaving well and learning to play cooperatively with others. They are encouraged to try healthy fruit snacks. Nursery children enjoyed the story of The Very Hungry Caterpillar, but not all children enjoyed eating the plums as much as the caterpillar did. Adults encourage children to respond individually to questions and to talk to each other, helping them to make sound progress in their speaking and communication skills. Teachers planning is not yet consistent across all classes and, consequently, sessions do not always challenge more-able children as much as they could. Appropriate planning is in place but it does not always identify challenge for children of different abilities. Care and welfare are a priority and contribute to childrens positive achievement.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

There was a very good response for a school of this size. All parents and carers are satisfied with the school. Parents and carers regard the school as very supportive, happy, welcoming and friendly. Most parents and carers say that their children enjoy attending and that they make enough progress. Parents and carers regard the school as extremely caring and supportive. They identify the warm family ethos, individual help for children and pupils enjoyment, amongst other strengths. The main parental and carer

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

concerns were about homework. The inspection findings confirmed the positive views expressed by parents and shared parents□ and carers□ concerns with senior leaders.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Monica'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 177 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 444 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	111	53	53	30	3	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	111	63	65	37	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	86	49	84	48	6	3	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	90	51	78	44	4	2	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	101	57	73	41	2	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	82	46	90	51	5	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	83	47	91	51	2	1	1	1
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)	79	45	82	46	2	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	75	43	93	53	3	2	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	81	46	83	47	5	3	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	66	37	92	52	5	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	98	55	74	42	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	107	61	70	40	1	1	1	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



15 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Monica's Catholic Primary School, Milton Keynes MK14 6HB

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers. We will remember how extremely polite and considerate you all were and how well you all behaved. You and your parents told us that St Monica's is a good school, and we agree.

These are the things we found that your school does well:

- You all do extremely well in English and many of you reach standards well-above average by the end of Year 6 because teaching is good.
- You all enjoy learning very much and your attendance is outstanding.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you are all extremely sensible and know how to keep safe.
- You really enjoy and benefit from the many fun activities, clubs, visits and visitors the school provides.
- Your school cares for you really well and teaches you a lot about how to be healthy and to care for others.
- Your headteacher and senior leaders lead the school well. They work effectively together as a team to make sure that St Monica's is a safe and secure, fun place to learn.

These are the things we have identified for staff and governors to improve:

- Make sure that all your teachers give challenging work to all of you who find the work easy in science.
- Make sure your teachers always plan challenging activities for all of you in the Nursery and Reception classes.

Thank you for a very enjoyable and memorable visit to your school and best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Marion Wallace

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.