

# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124349
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	340550
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 June –1 July 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Doris Bell

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

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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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	228
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Father P Brennan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Stephen Breeze
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 February 2007
<b>School address</b>	Hunter Road Cannock WS11 0AE
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<b>Email address</b>	office@st-marys-cannock.staffs.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 12 lessons and saw eight teachers teach. They also met with parents and carers, groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including teachers' planning, the school improvement plan, assessment, monitoring and evaluation records, records for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and safeguarding policies. The responses from the pupil and staff questionnaires were analysed, as were the responses from the 122 parents' and carers' questionnaires.

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

- attainment in Year 6 this year, and the progress of pupils in YR, Y2 and Y6, especially in writing and mathematics
- how effectively the new curriculum is in promoting basic skills, helping to improve boys' writing and halting the fluctuations in mathematics results
- how well leaders and managers at all levels lead improvement throughout the school, especially in writing and mathematics.

## Information about the school

This is an average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average, as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils with statements is, however, above average. The statements relate to learning, behaviour, visual and physical impairment. There are fewer pupils from minority ethnic groups than is found in most schools but this varies from year to year. Very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of one Nursery class that operates only in the morning, and one Reception class. Before- and after-school clubs and a pre-school group use the school premises and are subject to a separate inspection. The school received an Activemark last year for its work on promoting sport and exercise.

**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

The good quality education the school provides for its pupils ensures that they achieve well by Year 6. This happens because effective leadership has embedded in all staff a secure understanding of their individual and collective responsibility for what happens by the end of Key Stage 2. Arising from this is a shared sense of purpose, which is felt in all aspects of the school's work. Attainment is above average and writing and mathematics have improved considerably in the past two years. Early indications from this year's test results are that greater proportions of pupils, including boys, have reached the higher levels in both subjects, although boys' writing remains an issue for the school.

Underpinning all of this is accurate self evaluation, good quality teaching and a well planned curriculum, which, together with good care, guidance and support, ensure that all pupils, from the least to the most able, make good progress. These things demonstrate that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

Pupils work studiously in lessons. They behave well, listen carefully to the staff, say they 'love the work and the teachers', and try hard to live up to the high expectations their teachers have of them. Their infectious enthusiasm for learning was demonstrated well in an outstanding mathematics lesson where Year 6 pupils deepened their understanding of how to arrive at algebraic formula to help solve mathematical problems faster. Given their attainments at the end of Year 2, Year 6 pupils' progress in mathematics is outstanding.

The new creative curriculum is providing many opportunities for writing and, in some classes, there is more writing in the pupils' creative curriculum books than in their literacy books. Time for writing is sometimes curtailed in literacy lessons, particularly in Years 1 and 2, by, for example, having to draw a picture before writing, or being required only to write a limited number of sentences. This, combined with the over-use of worksheets noted in some classes, prevents pupils from writing at length. Although no significant differences were noted between boys' and girls' writing in lessons, in general, boys' books show they write less than girls and consequently do not practise and consolidate their writing skills as successfully.

The school's engagement with parents and carers is excellent. Parents, carers and pupils are proud of their school, pupils describing it as 'the best thing ever'. They work and play in a safe, secure and healthy environment, and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy. They respect themselves and others and make an excellent contribution to the school, parish and local communities. For example, they accept responsibility well as school councillors, house captains and office helpers, and engage with the parish and the community in a wide range of events. The school has done an audit of different aspects of community cohesion and started to formulate an

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action plan to improve its work in this area. However, pupils' awareness of different faiths, ethnicities and cultures remains underdeveloped, and opportunities to promote it within the creative curriculum have been overlooked.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- – Improve achievement in writing by:
  - encouraging boys to write at greater length in order to practise and consolidate their writing skills
  - giving pupils, especially in Years 1 and 2, more opportunities to write freely and cutting down on activities that limit their writing during literacy lessons.
- Promote community cohesion better by:
  - accelerating the timescale for implementing the action plan to strengthen this aspect of provision
  - building opportunities into the curriculum to teach pupils about the different faiths, ethnicities and cultures represented in the United Kingdom.

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

Progress is good throughout the school for pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A good proportion of this latter group of pupils reach the expected levels by Year 6. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress in learning to speak and write English. As they do, their learning in all other areas accelerates.

Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a good command of language and use it well in their writing. They have a well developed sense of style, present their work well, and grammar, spelling and punctuation are mostly accurate. Pupils' writing is imaginative and engages the reader well. Throughout the school, boys' writing tends to be briefer and their ideas less well developed than girls. Pupils use and apply their mathematical skills well in problem solving activities. By Year 6, they recall mathematical facts easily showing, for example, a good understanding of the relationship between percentages, decimals and fractions. Pupils in Year 2 showed they thoroughly enjoy challenges, such as finding missing numbers, and they readily use subtraction to check addition or division to check multiplication. This transference of skills was evident also as pupils in Year 6 calculated the number of flowerbeds in a given area, quickly realising that they could use elements of geometry and algebra to do so.

Pupils have a high degree of confidence in the staff, whom they trust to help them and keep them safe. Their good understanding of what healthy living means is underpinned by a wide range of well attended sport and exercise activities in which they enjoy a good degree of success. Pupils talk knowledgeably about healthy eating but their lunchboxes show they do not always practise what they know is right in this area. Lunchtimes are happy, social occasions where pupils chat and play happily together.

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Pupils have many opportunities for reflection and they are justifiably proud of their many contributions to the school, the parish and the local community. Year 6 pupils become 'special friends' to Reception children and help them at playtimes, and all pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong. Their spiritual, moral and social development is very strong.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

## How effective is the provision?

Pupils work and play in an attractive learning environment that supports their learning and personal development effectively. Teachers know their pupils well and use assessment information effectively in planning and target setting. Pupils know their targets and how to reach them. Good marking helps them in this. Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Well-briefed, well-deployed support staff contribute effectively to their good progress, as do the school's good partnerships with external agencies and other schools. These arrangements also ease transition between year groups and different phases of education.

<sup>1</sup> 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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In the best lessons, staff skilfully adjust activities as the lesson proceeds, breaking learning down further or adding greater challenge depending on what pupils need. Pupils report that 'teachers make lessons as much fun as they can'. The different ways in which pupils are taught brings learning alive for them and helps them to realise its relevance in their own lives. For example, Year 5 pupils' work on Sparta and Athens improved their understanding of the differences between a democracy and an autocracy and led to good quality writing about which they would prefer to live in and why. While never less than satisfactory, teaching is less successful, and the pace of learning slows when, for example, pupils complete too many worksheets or are not moved on to independent tasks soon enough in lessons.

The curriculum supports teaching well by bringing subjects together in themes that advance learning, including in basic skills, while also contributing effectively to most aspects of personal development, health and safety. Attendance is satisfactory but it has declined in the past two years, and a small proportion of children are persistently absent. The school was slow to tackle these issues but has now established an improvement plan and governors have agreed procedures that are due to come into force in September.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders successfully drive improvement and embed ambition by accurately monitoring, evaluating and improving teaching and learning. This, together with termly pupil progress meetings, gives them a good picture of each pupil's progress, which they use well to set challenging targets at different levels to move the school forward. Governors support the school leaders well in this by visiting classrooms, discussing issues with staff, and holding the school to account for its outcomes.

Safeguarding procedures are robust. The school goes beyond recommended good practice in this area, for example, taking an especially rigorous approach to internet safety, with regular updates and information for parents and carers. It promotes equality of opportunity well. Racist incidents are very rare and all pupils are fully included in everything the school has to offer. The school's self evaluation is accurate and, with the exception of community cohesion, its priorities are articulated clearly in the school improvement plan. The school understands its own context and that of the parish and local communities it serves. It promotes Christian values well and introduces

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pupils to some of the other major world religions. Overall, however, its work in raising pupils' awareness of the range and diversity of cultures and religions in the United Kingdom remains relatively underdeveloped.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start school at the levels expected for their age. They learn and develop well, making at least good progress in personal development and in early reading, writing and number skills. Effective induction procedures and excellent links with parents and carers ensure that children are happy and settled, develop good attitudes to learning and form effective relationships with others. Children readily include adults in their learning, and adults are adept at prompting children's learning through effective questioning. There is a good balance between adult directed activities and those the children select for themselves. Stimulating practical activities, such as the tropical fruit tasting in Reception, make learning exciting for them, and they quickly learn to share and take turns. Provision for outdoor learning is less well developed than indoors. The school knows this and has plans to improve it.

Good leadership and management have created a hardworking team with a common sense of purpose, and children's learning is assessed and tracked well. However, while planning is good overall, the use of assessment information in planning is better developed in Reception than in Nursery. Children are safe and well cared for, and the good partnership with the local authority has strengthened provision in this age group since the previous inspection.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly satisfied with the school and their children's progress. They praise the 'fabulous caring attitude' of the staff and commend the headteacher for listening and responding to their concerns. A few parents, carers and pupils raised some concerns about bullying but inspectors found that when any such issues are brought to the school's attention, they are dealt with promptly. Most parents, carers and pupils also felt this was the case. Several comments in the questionnaires, confirmed by discussions with them as they brought their children to school, showed they had 'good confidence' that 'even little issues are dealt with quickly'.

## 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 122 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 228 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	66	39	32	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	91	75	28	23	2	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	75	61	44	36	3	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	77	63	39	32	4	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	83	68	39	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	71	58	48	39	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	82	67	37	30	2	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)	74	61	46	38	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	72	59	45	37	3	2	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	63	52	50	41	6	5	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	65	53	51	42	4	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	77	63	44	36	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	86	70	33	27	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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](http://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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



2 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Cannock, WS11 0AE

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school and for talking to us about what you do there. You and your parents and carers are right in thinking you go to a good school where you are safe and well cared for and where good teaching helps you to make good progress. It was good to see how knowing your targets and how to improve your work has given you confidence in your own ability, especially by the time you are in Years 5 and 6. You said the 'teachers make lessons as much fun as they can'. We saw good evidence of this during our visit and noted how it made you want to find out more and more for yourselves. Keep this up and you should do well in the future.

The headteacher and staff are helping you to reach ever higher standards in your work. They are also helping you understand how to keep yourselves fit and healthy. We could see how much you enjoy sport, including the many clubs the school puts on for you. You explained the principles of healthy eating well but we noticed that your lunchboxes still contain things that go against healthy eating. Perhaps you could persuade your parents or carers to help you in this.

We know that your school is trying to become outstanding and we are asking it to work on some things that will help it get there. They are:

- to encourage boys to write more in lessons so they can show off their writing skills better, and to give pupils in Years 1 and 2 more opportunities to do longer pieces of writing
- to help you learn more about the many different faiths and cultures that exist in the United Kingdom today.

We hope you will enjoy learning in the future as much as you do now and we wish you well.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell

Lead inspector

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