

St Marie's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107113
Local Authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	356090
Inspection dates	9–10 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Julie Price Grimshaw

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	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Nancy Cultinha
Headteacher	Mr Alan Dewhurst
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed seven lessons taught by seven teachers and held meetings with parents, governors, staff, and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at improvement planning, policy documents, national published assessment data, the school's own data and pupils' work. Inspectors also analysed 74 parental questionnaires as well as those from a sample of pupils and staff.

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

- The strategies used by the school to tackle the underachievement in mathematics indicated by 2009 data, and the extent to which these strategies are sustainable.
- How the school has responded to changes at senior management level.
- The effectiveness of the school's cycle of monitoring, evaluation and planning, and the involvement of staff and the governing body in this process

Information about the school

This average-sized school serves the community in the immediate vicinity but also takes pupils from other parts of Sheffield. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average although few are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal is well below average. An average number of pupils has special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school has received a number of awards including Investors in Pupils, Healthy Schools and the Active Mark.

Since the last inspection there has been significant disruption to staffing at senior management level resulting in new staff taking up key posts. The headteacher took up post in January 2009 and the deputy headteacher in January 2010.

The inspection took place early in the term when no children had yet been admitted to the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

2

Main findings

St Marie's provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Several aspects of the school's work, including care, guidance and support, and the curriculum, are good. There is strong evidence of ongoing improvement. An outstanding feature is the school's engagement with parents and carers, who say that their views are always considered and acted upon. They appreciate the openness and approachability of all staff, including senior managers. The views of the vast majority are reflected in the comment, 'We are absolutely delighted to be part of this wonderful school community.'

Over recent years there was a decline in pupils' overall achievement at Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics where there was some underachievement in 2009. The school has worked hard to reverse this trend by using a number of effective strategies, including developing a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics. The success of these strategies can be seen in the 2010 results and in the quality of pupils' work seen during the inspection, both of which suggest significant improvement and a sustainable upward trend. Children get off to a good start in the Reception class. From starting points that are generally in line with typical expectations, pupils now make satisfactory progress to reach broadly average attainment by the end of Year 6.

Pupils enjoy learning. Their great enthusiasm for school is evident in comments such as, 'All the staff are so kind and caring and they help us to care for one another.' Their attendance is above average, they are punctual and their teamworking skills are particularly good; as a result they are well prepared for the next stages of their education.

Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and teachers often use resources well to enhance learning. In lessons where expectations are high, pupils respond well to challenging work and make good progress. However, the level of challenge is occasionally too low for pupils, especially the most able. Lesson planning does not always indicate precisely enough what pupils are expected to learn by the end of the lesson and, consequently, the pupils themselves are sometimes unsure about intended learning outcomes. Much successful work has been done to improve the use of assessment and this is now good overall. Nonetheless, the school is aware that there is scope for broader use of different assessment strategies, such as pupils' self-assessment and peer-assessment, and the need to consider such assessment opportunities in lesson planning.

The school has a detailed and accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. The new senior management team has worked with considerable success over the past year to drive improvement across the school. This is evident not just in rising achievement but

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also in high staff morale. Consequently, there is good capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and raise attainment by:
 - increasing the level of challenge for all pupils, particularly the most able
 - ensuring that lesson planning includes clear reference to intended learning outcomes, which are then shared with pupils
 - using a variety of assessment strategies, including peer-assessment and self-assessment, and considering opportunities for the use of such strategies at the planning stage.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

Pupils are keen to learn and behave well during lessons. A particularly strong feature is their command of spoken language: they are very articulate and able to express themselves well. During lessons they enjoy collaborative working and are very supportive of each other. This was apparent in one lesson where pupils worked in groups, using a catalogue of household items to plan how they would furnish various rooms according to a budget; they used mathematical, language and reasoning skills very effectively and clearly enjoyed the task very much. In a few lessons where the level of challenge was too low, pupils worked at a slower pace and their attention occasionally drifted a little. All pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities declined in recent years but this issue has now been rectified. As a result these pupils make at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress. The school's recent emphasis on improving outcomes in mathematics is evident in pupils' attitudes, with many saying that mathematics is, 'really good fun' and 'the best subject we do in lessons!'

Pupils say that they feel very safe in school and have a good understanding of their own safety, including how to stay safe when using the internet. They are able to discuss in detail the importance of vitamins in the diet and the effects of exercise on muscles. Pupils are proud to be part of the school community and are very keen to play an active part. For example, older pupils talked enthusiastically about work with children in the Reception class. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. They show much respect for people of different faiths and cultural backgrounds.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Recent emphasis on improving the learning environment has resulted in colourful and stimulating classrooms. The caring nature of the school is shown through displays in each classroom; pupils are encouraged to appreciate their own qualities and those of their classmates. Teachers use information and communication technology well to enhance teaching and learning. Support staff work effectively to meet the needs of individual pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Throughout the school, pupils are encouraged to develop their skills in speaking and listening, which makes a significant contribution to their learning.

Since the last inspection the school has worked successfully to develop links between subjects and this has resulted in a curriculum that promotes pupils' interest and enthusiasm. There is a very good range of enrichment activities that many pupils take advantage of. Pupils are keen to talk about their topic work, including some particularly good projects based on the local environment. Curriculum planning is good, with careful attention being paid to coverage of themes across the school. Although there have been recent improvements to the format of lesson planning, plans often include emphasis on the tasks pupils will complete rather than on what learning is intended for that lesson. There is also limited evidence of planning for a range of assessment opportunities. Although staff pay attention to tailoring work for different groups of pupils, the level of challenge, particularly for the most able, is sometimes too low and this impedes

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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progress.

The 'family atmosphere' of the school is rightly praised by staff, parents and pupils. Pastoral care is very effective and pupils are extremely confident that staff will listen to their concerns and sort out any worries or problems that may arise. The quality of guidance regarding pupils' academic work is satisfactory although this aspect is improving. Good quality arrangements for transition ensure that pupils quickly settle, whether they join the school in Reception class or later on.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has responded positively to changes at senior management level. The headteacher has worked very effectively to establish a strong team approach to evaluating and monitoring the school's work, involving staff and the governing body so that all are fully aware of the priorities for improvement. Development planning is of good quality and reflects the clear vision of the leadership team. Teaching and learning are managed well, with areas for improvement being identified clearly and linked to professional development for staff. There is convincing evidence that outcomes for pupils are improving.

The governing body carries out all statutory duties, including those relating to the safeguarding of pupils. The school places great importance on ensuring that pupils are safe at all times and procedures are understood by all and applied effectively. The governing body is now fully aware of how it can best offer support and challenge to the school, most significantly through greater involvement in evaluating and monitoring the school's work.

Parents and carers appreciate the weekly newsletter and are kept well informed about their children's progress through both informal and formal means. The headteacher has set up a forum so that parents and carers can express their views and make suggestions. There are numerous examples of ways in which they have contributed to decision making. Parents and carers, in turn, are happy to play their part in the school community by giving time and using their individual expertise, for example, by generally helping out in classrooms or by providing support for groups of pupils, such as the gifted and talented.

The school promotes equality of opportunity well. Data on the various groups of pupils is analysed to ensure that any differences in outcomes or provision are quickly identified

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and tackled. The school is a very harmonious community where pupils of different ethnic heritage work well together. Community cohesion is promoted effectively, with the school's work being evaluated in relation to ethnicity, faith and socio-economic contexts. Good quality partnership work, including that involving a group of local schools, helps to enrich the curriculum and promotes pupils' personal development.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Although no evidence could be gained from direct observation of teaching and learning, other evidence shows that the all aspects of provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Children join the Reception class from a variety of pre-school settings, and staff establish very good relationships with parents and children through the home visits that take place at the start of the autumn term. These visits include the opportunity for staff to make a preliminary assessment of children's skills in particular areas, which are then noted and used to tailor provision for individuals. As a result of the home visits, children are well prepared for starting school and quickly develop confidence in staff.

Although attainment on entry to the Reception class varies, children's skills are generally in line with typical age-related expectations. By the end of the Reception Year most have broadly average skills, although they make particularly good progress in speaking and listening as well as in their social development. Staff work well together to plan activities based on individual children's progress. Recent building work has enhanced the learning environment. Pupils elsewhere in the school speak with great enthusiasm about their time in the Reception class and many older pupils are very keen to spend some

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time each week working with children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and many of the questionnaires returned included positive comments. They particularly appreciate the high quality of pastoral care and the approachability of all staff. Several commented on the good quality of the transition arrangements when moving from other schools.

A small minority of parents and carers, although generally pleased with all aspects of the school's work, commented that their children were not always sufficiently challenged in lessons. Inspectors found evidence to endorse this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Marie'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 74 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 230 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	72	20	27	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	62	84	12	16	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	42	57	28	38	4	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	58	25	34	5	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	59	26	35	4	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	53	30	41	4	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	70	22	30	0	0	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)	46	62	25	34	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	57	26	35	6	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	48	65	22	30	2	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	53	33	45	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	57	77	17	23	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	74	17	23	2	3	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



13 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Marie's Catholic Primary School, Sheffield, S10 3DQ

As you know, I visited your school recently together with two other inspectors so that we could find out how well you are doing. I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for sharing your views with us. I would also like to share our main findings with you.

Overall, your school is satisfactory and we can see that it is improving. In the past some pupils' progress in mathematics has not been fast enough but this year the test results for Year 6 were much better, and your work in class shows that it is improving further. It was great to hear so many of you say how much you liked mathematics! One thing that impressed us was your skill in using spoken English: it was a pleasure to talk to you and to listen to the way in which you explained things so clearly. You also work very well in teams and it is clear that you support each other. You told us that all the staff care for you very well and we agree with you. Many of your parents and carers said that they like the family atmosphere in your school and it was lovely to see that you all get on so well together. One of the best things about the school is the way in which the staff work with your parents and carers, making sure that they have all the information they need and also that they are included in making decisions about the school.

Your headteacher and all the staff would like you to make even faster progress and reach higher standards in your English and mathematics. We have suggested that they make sure that all of you are given work that is hard enough and really makes you think. We have also said that it would be helpful if you always knew what you needed to learn by the end of each lesson, and if you were given more chances to assess your own work and that of your classmates.

We are glad that you are proud to attend St Marie's and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Julie Price Grimshaw

Lead inspector

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