

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102036
Local Authority	Enfield
Inspection number	323574
Inspection dates	26–27 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Heather Weston HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	397
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Marie Negus
Headteacher	Ms Maeve Creed
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Durants Road Ponders End Enfield EN3 7DE

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	26–27 February 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's School is larger than most primary schools, with an increasing roll. Most pupils come from the local Roman Catholic parish community, which extends beyond the surrounding area. The school has a below average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is just below average. Over half of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is much more than in most schools; these come predominantly from Black African backgrounds, but with a fair number from Irish and Other White backgrounds. Approximately one quarter of pupils, about twice the national average, have English as an additional language. The school has a breakfast club managed by an outside provider.

The school has a number of awards, two of which reflect the core work of the school. These are: the Leading Parent Partnership Award and the Edward de Bono Thinking Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Mary's is a good school. Some features of provision, such as care, guidance and support and the school's work to promote equality, are outstanding. The school is highly inclusive and totally committed to equality of opportunity. Pupils' personal development and well-being, and the quality of partnerships with parents, are exemplary. The Catholic ethos of the school shines through everything. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Two parents echoed the view of others by stating that 'It is a school full of love and affection. I am over the moon that my child goes there, and she is too!', and 'It is a large Christian family which looks after the spiritual and moral life of all the children'.

There have been a number of tragic events affecting the school over recent years, as well as substantial changes of staff. The headteacher has sensitively guided the school through these very troubled times and, although there was a slight drop in standards in 2006, standards have remained significantly above average over a period of years. Pupils make good progress at each stage of their education, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, in Key Stage 1 and in Key Stage 2. The school has achieved remarkable success in improving literacy skills, from below average when children enter school to exceptionally high standards at the end of Key Stage 2. These consistently high standards are the result of dedicated work to promote pupils' personal development and well-being, and of good teaching and the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Parents recognise this dedication - as one stated, 'The headteacher is a gift from God, and the teachers are angels'. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is second to none. The impact of Edward de Bono's 'thinking hats', together with the newly introduced 'habits of mind' throughout the whole school, has been notable in promoting thinking skills. These programmes, together with the outstanding personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, mean that pupils know themselves well, understand the feelings and needs of others, and apply themselves diligently to their learning. They are involved in decision making at a number of levels, for example by choosing, with governors' approval, the school motto of 'Love, listen and learn'. This sums up their attitude!

Teaching and learning are distinctive in their promotion of thinking skills, in the very positive relationships promoted, and in the highly successful tips that pupils are given by their teachers for effective learning. At its best, teaching is outstanding, but senior leaders are aware that there are some inconsistencies in this area, because in some lessons the activities are not sufficiently matched to the needs of all pupils.

The curriculum is good and is well enriched. The school demonstrates its knowledge of pupils' needs by planning just the right visits and visitors to enrich their experiences. However, the organisation of the curriculum means that too few opportunities are created to develop the core skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) in other subjects.

Procedures to ensure pupils' safety are rigorous, and pupils know that there is always someone to support them, whatever their needs. Assessment data are analysed carefully to ensure that any pupils at risk of falling behind receive carefully tailored support to enable them to quickly catch up. Despite setbacks, the school has made good improvement since the last inspection and has developed good capacity to manage change and to improve in difficult circumstances. This is the result of leadership and management, which are good, with outstanding elements. Leaders continually strive to enable pupils to achieve high standards, and set them challenging

targets. The use of target setting, and the school's contribution to community cohesion, are outstanding. Self-evaluation is accurate, and involves leaders at all levels.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to the Nursery is in line with expectations, although children's personal, social and emotional development is comparatively low, and their use of spoken language is limited. Staff carry out home visits before children start Nursery, and these form the start of the very good relationships and close liaison with parents throughout the school. The assessments carried out during these visits feed into each pupil's entry profile. Appropriately, a strong emphasis is placed on developing children's social skills and language skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that children are ready for their move to Year 1. Standards reached by children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are above national expectations, and have risen year-on-year since 2006. Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding and are enhanced by their understanding of thinking skills and their use of 'thinking hats'. Their communication skills are promoted effectively by all adults, who talk and listen to children, encouraging them to develop their own ideas and to develop independence. Teaching is good, provision is well managed, and children's progress is carefully tracked to make sure that they all achieve well overall. Progress is very good in their personal, social and emotional development and language skills. Children are given the opportunity to learn through play and exploration both indoors and outside, and observation records inform the planning of the next steps in their learning. The promotion of children's safety and welfare is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning by ensuring that activities are always tailored to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Ensure that the core skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are developed throughout the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall standards reached by pupils at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 have been significantly higher than average for a number of years. They dropped slightly in 2006, but have improved since then. In 2008, standards in writing were particularly high at the end Key Stage 1. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils reached exceptionally high standards in English, in both reading and writing. From their starting points on entry, all groups of pupils - boys, girls, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, and all those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities - make at least good progress.

Current pupils are also making good progress and are on target to meet the challenging targets set for 2009.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The strong, caring relationships in the school underpin a positive environment in which every pupil feels truly valued and able to succeed. This leads pupils to develop very positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils and parents say that children really love coming to school. One parent

stated, 'My son jumps out of bed every day because he knows he has to be at school.' Pupils develop high self-esteem, and they have a clear framework that enables them all to understand right from wrong. This, coupled with teachers' high expectations, means that behaviour around the school is exemplary. Pupils say they feel extremely safe in school. Close relationships with the church contribute very effectively to pupils' excellent spiritual development. Pupils have a good understanding of the factors that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. Due to rigorous systems, pupils understand the importance of regular attendance, which is above the national average. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community through, for example charitable activities, through their involvement in the Children's Area Partnership and through their contribution to decision making in the school. Due to the good standards reached by pupils, their good progress, and the impact of thinking skills, learners develop an outstanding level of skills to support their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Typically, teachers help their pupils to think about their learning in different ways, use questioning to very good effect, and provide pupils with hints and tips as to how to do their work well. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and the quality of work expected. As a result, pupils work hard and respond eagerly to the tasks set. Teachers understand their subjects well and plan varied activities that mostly meet pupils' needs. Pupils are aware of their targets and understand what they need to do to improve their work. In the very best lessons, these features are blended with ease and are honed to ensure that pupils are consistently working at the edge of their capabilities. However, lessons of this quality are not consistent throughout the school. In particular, the school is aware that in some classes the work set for pupils of differing abilities is too similar so that, at times, it is too easy for some and too hard for others.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils benefit considerably from a highly effective programme for developing the social and emotional aspects of their learning through topics such as 'Say no to bullying' and 'Going for goals'. This helps them to become very confident in reflecting upon themselves as individuals and in helping them to understand how they learn most effectively. Residential visits, and well-attended clubs such as football training, the chess club, netball and the school choir, add extra zest to the curriculum and help widen pupils' experiences. The academic curriculum is mostly subject based. Within this, English, with its focus on 'Big Writing', is given high priority. This is very well planned and delivered and consequently leads to high standards in this subject. Curriculum coverage is good in mathematics and science, and the school is rightly increasing the emphasis on problem solving and investigational work to further boost pupils' skills and promote progress. Pupils benefit from topics such as 'Ancient Greece' and 'The coast' in history and geography. However, these are predominantly based on one subject and, as a result, opportunities are missed to weave the curriculum together and ensure that literacy, numeracy and ICT permeate all subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Arrangements for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils are very rigorous and effective, and risk assessments are carefully attended to. An important strength of the school is its strong Christian ethos, which contributes greatly to pupils' enjoyment and well-being. Pupils' emotional well-being is supported strongly through the school's personal and emotional provision. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are secure. The school has very good links with outside agencies to ensure early identification and intervention for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Assessment procedures are thorough and rigorous. They are used well to track achievement and identify those pupils who are at risk of not making enough progress. These pupils are then supported by appropriate interventions to ensure that they swiftly catch up. Academic guidance is good. Targets are used to good effect. However, although the best marking gives pupils effective advice as to how to improve their work, the effectiveness of marking and the impact of this advice are not consistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The commitment, compassion and clear vision of the headteacher are recognised by parents and supported by all staff and governors. Her leadership has ensured that the school is in good heart after a number of setbacks. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher, and together they provide outstanding leadership. They have successfully developed the role of middle leaders, and self-evaluation is now firmly established and accurate. Action planning is strategic, focused and detailed. Staff are aware of their accountability, but are also aware that they will be supported in their roles. This support is outstanding, with mentoring and buddying systems in place for new staff, and a strong emphasis on continuing professional development.

The school has excellent links with parents, for example through termly curriculum evenings for parents and regular 'Bring your Dad to school' and 'Bring your Mum to school' days. Parents wholeheartedly support the school, and report that the headteacher does all she can for them and their children to support them in their learning. In addition to the parent learning sessions, parents recognise the benefit of the information given about local training. It is small wonder that the school received strong praise in the report awarding them the Leading Parent Partnership Award. The emphasis on pupils' personal development, together with the distinctive Catholic identity that 'models community, based on the gospel values of justice and peace' contributes strongly to community cohesion. Through religious education, PSHE and worship, pupils are enabled to understand other cultures, and people and places experiencing difficulty. As a result, the school's promotion of community cohesion is outstanding.

Governors are very well informed. They share the high expectations of the headteacher and provide a good level of both support and challenge. They visit on a regular basis, and formally visit classes to observe the effectiveness of practice and the deployment of resources. They have worked successfully with the headteacher to achieve the recommended financial standards.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

12 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Enfield, EN3 7DE

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We were extremely impressed by your politeness and your behaviour, and by your incredibly good understanding of thinking hats and habits of mind! We were also impressed by your school. We found out that it is a good school with a number of outstanding features.

Ms Creed and the staff do all they can to make sure that you understand yourself and your needs, and the needs of others. They make sure that you make good progress in your learning, but they are not satisfied with that, because they are working hard to make your progress even better. Your school looks after you very well. The support, guidance and care that you receive are outstanding. All the adults make sure that any difficulties any of you have which might get in the way of your learning are overcome. I know that both you and your parents think that the school is very good, and appreciate what the school is doing to help you learn.

Ms Creed, with the help of the other staff, has identified ways to help you make more progress. We have agreed with the staff that in order to help you make even better progress, the school is going to:

- make sure that your work is never too easy or too hard
- make sure that you have the opportunity to develop your reading, writing, and mathematical skills in other subjects, and also to use ICT wherever possible.

I am sure you can put on your green thinking hats and help the teachers do this!

Yours faithfully

Heather Weston

Her Majesty's Inspector