

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108396
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	331431
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Sue Brown HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.
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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	214
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Bernadette Kebell
Headteacher	Mrs Mary McMillan
Date of previous school inspection	February 2006
School address	Duckpool Lane Whickham Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE16 4HB
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and held meetings with pupils, staff, governors and managers. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation for safeguarding pupils, assessment and record keeping, planning, management, teaching and the curriculum. The responses to a questionnaire issued to parents/carers were also analysed.

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

- the standards pupils reach and the progress they make particularly in English
- how effectively the school monitors and evaluates pupil performance in order to improve outcomes
- provision for children in the EYFS in the Pre-School and the Reception class.

Information about the school

St Mary's school serves children from the parishes of St Mary's Whickham, and Immaculate Heart Lobley Hill from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. Children aged 3 to school age attend Duckpool Pre-School, which is on the school site. Children of school age are taught in the Reception class. Four members of staff are relatively new to the school. At the time of the inspection the school was undergoing building work to enhance provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and provide improved accommodation for management and administration.

The school holds many awards from external bodies including those for Basic Skills and Healthy Eating. Its status as a Rights Respecting School was also recently recognised.

Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	214	Average
Free school meals	2.4%	Well below average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	7.2%	Well below average
Proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities	12.4%	Below average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	Less than 1%	Well below average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Less than 1%	Well below average

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Mary's is an outstanding school because it provides good teaching, an outstanding curriculum and exceptionally good care and guidance. Pupils reach above average standards by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6. Most make good progress in their learning because of their positive attitudes and exceptional behaviour. However, boys and more able pupils do not always make the progress that is expected of them in writing. The school works effectively to help pupils understand other communities in Europe and further afield. It ensures that they have the confidence to express their opinions and it provides them with opportunities to influence decisions about their learning and well being. The school works very closely with parents and carers and successfully helps them to support their children's learning. The headteacher, governors and other managers provide effective leadership. They recognise that more can be done to analyse information about pupils' work in order to plan for further improvement. Indeed, many aspects of the school's work, such as the curriculum and the progress that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make, have improved since the last inspection and it is well placed to continue this improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve progress in writing throughout the school particularly for boys and for more able pupils.
- Improve the analysis of pupils' academic performance and use this more systematically and strategically to:
 - identify where outcomes can be improved further
 - ensure that actions are specifically targeted to bring about improvement.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

1

The school meets the needs of its pupils exceptionally well. Pupils make good progress based on their starting points and capabilities, and enjoy their learning. By the end of Year 6 the majority are well rounded individuals with an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They know how to stay healthy by

eating the right foods and taking regular exercise. Many participate in the wide range of after school clubs that involve regular physical activity. In classrooms and around the school the behaviour of pupils is exemplary. They have positive attitudes to learning and the experiences provided by the school fire their enthusiasm and ensure their engagement. Pupils contribute very well to their school and the wider community. They care for each other through the buddy system and the 'Amigos' groups which bring together pupils of different age-groups. Their views are taken into account regularly by the school council. Links with a school in Kenya have enabled pupils to develop a good understanding of the impact of the recent disturbances in that country. Closer to home they have explored how people of all ages can become homeless. Pupils are able to organise activities for themselves and they work well individually and in teams. Rates of attendance are high and punctuality is good.

Standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 had been above the national averages for a number of years. More recently, and taking into account the school's unvalidated data for 2008, the proportions of pupils reaching expected levels at the end of Key Stage 2 have fluctuated. Test results in 2007 dipped so that standards in English and mathematics were broadly average. Results in 2008 are better because all pupils attained the expected levels in all three core subjects. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in English has fallen each year from two-thirds in 2006, to one-third in 2008 and girls out-perform boys to a greater degree than is usually the case. Similar fluctuations and a fall in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in writing occur at the end of Key Stage 1.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make exceptionally good progress. Provision, through support in class and small groups, is closely tailored to the needs of individual children. Pupils enjoy these sessions.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

The quality of the school's work

Teaching is good and it enables pupils to make good progress. Teachers plan interesting work, which is well matched to the needs of pupils and based on regular, accurate assessments of their knowledge, understanding, skills and interests. The pace of lessons is brisk and purposeful. Pupils know how well they are doing and most can explain their targets very clearly. They concentrate well, are keen to participate in activities and take care in the presentation of their work. They contribute to discussions knowing that their suggestions and opinions are valued. Occasionally teachers keep the whole class together for too long. This makes it difficult to ensure that instructions and explanations are understood by all pupils. Teaching assistants provide high quality support and in most cases this is deployed very effectively.

The school has accurate information on the achievement of pupils. It does not always use it well enough to ensure that relative weaknesses are tackled as quickly as possible. The school recognised but did not prevent the fall in standards in English at Key Stage 2 in 2007. Subsequently, the actions it took brought about swift improvement in 2008. However not all those pupils who should have reached the higher Level 5 did so and the gap between the performance of boys and girls did not reduce. The school's analysis was not sufficiently specific about where the gaps in learning were for these pupils.

The school provides an outstanding curriculum, which broadens pupils' experiences and makes a significant contribution to their personal development. Provision for ICT is good and will be enhanced by the facilities currently being developed. The introduction of foreign languages enriches the curriculum. Pupils in Reception enjoyed being greeted in Spanish and many were able to respond.

The school provides an outstanding level of support, care and guidance for pupils. Through individual discussions, pupil reports, parents' meetings, newsletters and the website, the school provides parents and carers with a wealth of information about their own child's progress and the work of the school. At the time of the inspection, the school met all safeguarding requirements.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	1
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Good leadership and management have brought about improvement since the last inspection in many aspects of the school's work. Leaders and managers monitor the work of the school and this results in an accurate evaluation of the school's many strengths and what it could do even better. However, the school does not have sufficient information about performance over time in the EYFS. Furthermore, the analysis of performance information elsewhere in the school is not always detailed enough to bring about all the improvements necessary.

The very active and involved governing body make a good contribution to the work of the school. They have productive working relationships with staff. They contribute to the school's outstanding relationship with parents and carers. Parents' views are regularly sought and acted upon, for example, there have been changes to the organisation of parents' evenings and the content of homework. Parents regularly support the school particularly for the first half hour of the day when they help small groups of pupils with their learning.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is exemplary. It recognises that the majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and successfully promotes an ethos and curriculum, which ensure that pupils develop an understanding of others and the value of diversity.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	1
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	1
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	1
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision made by the school for children in the EYFS is good. Children get off to a good start in Duckpool Pre-School. They play well on their own and with other children and adults in the outside area. Adults work effectively with small groups of children on well planned activities that meet their needs and interests. A group enjoyed investigating what magnets can do. At story time they all joined in with obvious enthusiasm and enjoyment.

These children transfer smoothly into the Reception class where they join others who have attended different pre-school settings. Most children begin school with skills that are in line with what would be expected nationally. They are happy, well behaved and enthusiastic learners who are secure with daily routines. Adults provide enjoyable activities, both indoors and outside, that ensure that children make good progress. They experience a good balance of adult-led and child initiated activities. They are encouraged to make choices, for example about which set of construction materials they will use to make a vehicle they had designed previously.

Leaders and managers have secured a common sense of purpose amongst all staff that successfully promotes children's personal and social development. They have established very positive links with parents. Information from observation and assessment is used very well on a day to day basis to ensure that individual children achieve as much as they can. However, the school is not yet able to monitor the effectiveness of EYFS provision over time or use this information when analysing the fluctuations in outcomes for groups of children as they move through the school.

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 the children in the EYFS promoted?*	1
How effectively is the provision in the EYFS led and managed?*	2

* Common judgements made across all inspections of the EYFS

Views of parents and carers

Replies to the inspection questionnaire were received from the parents/carers of a quarter of pupils. The majority of those who replied are very satisfied with all aspects of provision made by the school. Comments such as 'My children have thrived in the happy atmosphere', and 'I have every confidence in the school to look after my children and bring out the best of them in every respect' reflect the views of many parents/carers. The findings of the inspection support these views but not those of the ten per cent who expressed some concern with the quality of information provided by the school on pupils' progress.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
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.



20/11/08

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Gateshead, NE16 4HB

Thank-you for making me and my colleague so welcome when we visited you recently. We really enjoyed being in your school and talking with you. You expressed your views clearly and confidently. You helped us to understand how your school works and what makes it outstanding. You obviously enjoy school because you attend very regularly. I was very impressed to hear the Reception class children saying 'hello' in Spanish.

Your behaviour during our visit was exemplary. It was good to see how well you look after each other in the playground. You also know a lot about keeping fit and healthy. Many of you take part in after school activities and you were keen to tell me about the Irish dancing.

You reach above average standards and make good progress with your work because of the good teaching and outstanding care and support that you receive. You work well on your own and you also know how to co-operate in groups.

Your school is well managed. You know that all members of staff work hard to keep you safe and to make lessons interesting and enjoyable. To help your school get even better, we are asking them and the governors to:

- help you do better at writing
- make better use of information that they have about your achievements.

Please thank your parents for returning the questionnaire they received.

With very best wishes for your future

Sue Brown

Susan Brown
Her Majesty's Inspector

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