

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Ipswich

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Unique reference number | 124784 |
| Local authority | Suffolk |
| Inspection number | 380983 |
| Inspection dates | 26–27 January 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Kath Beck |

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 | 224 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Paul Febvre |
| Headteacher | Maureen Etheridge |
| Date of previous school inspection | 28 November 2006 |
| School address | Woodbridge Road Ipswich IP4 4BA |
| Telephone number | 01473 728372 |
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Introduction

Inspection team

Katherine Beck

Additional inspector

Lynn Lowery

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Half of the time was spent observing teaching and learning. Inspectors visited 15 lessons taught by seven teachers and teaching assistants. They made short visits to sessions where pupils were taught specific skills to help them to read, to sing and to play instruments. Inspectors also observed a further seven short sessions accompanied by the headteacher. Some pupils read to inspectors. Meetings were held with parents, carers, groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body, and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including: the school's evaluation of its effectiveness; the school development plan; minutes of governing body meetings; records that track pupils' progress; records to show the monitoring of the quality of teaching; and pupils' work. In addition, they looked at records of attendance and arrangements to secure pupils' health and safety. Inspectors analysed the 143 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers. They also analysed the response to questionnaires issued to staff and to pupils.

Information about the school

This school is similar in size to the majority of primary schools. Pupils come from diverse backgrounds, but mostly White British, Irish, any other White and any other mixed backgrounds. The percentage of pupils who come from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language is above that normally found. The proportion known to be eligible for free schools meals is very low compared to other schools nationally. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below that found in most schools, although an above average number of them have a statement of special educational needs. These mainly relate to physical and behavioural difficulties. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a 13 place part-time Nursery and one Reception class. The proportion of pupils who start and leave the school at other than the usual times is much lower than average. The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. It holds the Platinum 'Sing Up' Award.

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 | 1 |
| Achievement of pupils | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | 1 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 1 |
| Leadership and management | 1 |

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. Senior leaders, the governing body, parents, carers and pupils share a highly ambitious vision for the school. Its aim for pupils to 'be confident, competent learners, with a pride in themselves and their achievements' is met extremely well.
- Attainment is exceptionally high in reading, writing, mathematics, music and art by the time pupils leave the school. In 2011, one fifth of the pupils in Year 6 reached levels of attainment in reading normally only found in secondary schools. Attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 2 is well above the national average. One parent said, 'This is an excellent school that achieves high standards, but provides children with lively curriculum experiences and a real sense of community.'
- Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language, make outstanding progress as their programme of work is often personalised. A wide range of skills and knowledge, including information and communication technology skills, are developed rapidly.
- Highly successful, challenging activities enthuse and motivate pupils to work hard, cooperate effectively, reflect on differing views and achieve as well as they possibly can. Incisive questioning and challenging discussion in Years 3 to 6 enable pupils to develop their thoughts and extend the vocabulary they wish to use in order to write convincingly. Staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 offer many activities that excite pupils' curiosity and encourage lively conversation. They have undergone training to promote pupils' language development. That said, not all staff engage pupils sufficiently in discussions and ask questions that accelerate their language development.
- The strong promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development results in exemplary behaviour that enables pupils to be safe, and learn and thrive in an atmosphere of respect and dignity.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 implement fully the skills learned in recent training to enable pupils to accelerate their language development.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire rightly believe that their children, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, make at least good progress. Inspection evidence shows that pupils achieve exceptionally well in relation to their starting points and are typically working at levels well above those found in primary schools nationally. The emphasis on teaching key literacy and numeracy skills permeates all year groups, but not at the expense of other subjects. Children in the Nursery make marks that they know represent letters and the sounds they make, and most learn to count to ten and beyond. Reception children are already skilled in blending sounds and letters to read new words and use them successfully to write the menus for their 'Chinese Restaurant' role-play. They can use practical equipment well to carry out simple calculations.

In Year 2 pupils read extremely well, with immense enjoyment. Pupils write creatively with their teacher providing ambitious words and phrases, such as 'scrumptious, and 'racked my brains', and apply their knowledge of punctuation and grammar accurately. This is to broaden their vocabulary. Pupils' understanding of place-value and calculation is excellent, and many can add numbers containing hundreds tens and units correctly.

In Year 6, pupils have an excellent range of strategies to use when solving complex problems. This, together with their rapid mental recall of times tables and addition of single and double digit numbers, enables them to apply their skills to any mathematical challenge with confidence. Pupils are sophisticated readers and use their skills to carry out research and deepen their knowledge across the curriculum. They are highly skilled in their use of vocabulary, grammar and punctuation to write persuasive arguments as to whether animals should be used in medical research or whether children should be tested at age 11. They also write creatively and at length, drawing their ideas from their extensive reading. Their writing about Anne Frank is moving, and powerfully reflects their empathy for her situation. Consequently, they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their learning.

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Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, or those who are new to English are fully included in lessons, with tasks and resources designed to meet their specific needs. As a result they become confident, able to use their initiative and rapidly acquire vital skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Most pupils talk and communicate effectively, but some pupils from all backgrounds do not have the breadth of vocabulary they need. Staff working in Years 1 and 2 and the Early Years Foundation Stage do not consistently extend these pupils' early spoken and communication skills.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers are correct in their views that their children are taught really well. Outstanding teaching that promoted pupils' spiritual, moral and social development extremely well in reading, writing, mathematics and music was observed in the majority of classes, including the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Teachers use the planned curriculum to ensure that pupils are consistently challenged to acquire the knowledge and skills they need across a wide range of subjects. Captivating activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage establish very good habits in learning and set the foundations for later learning in reading, writing and problem-solving. These are built on year-by-year with increasing levels of difficulty. Pupils in Year 1 used their knowledge of the sounds letters make to write short letters, as if they were one of 'The three little pigs' writing to their mother, to explain their choice of house building material. Year 2 pupils used a joined script and sound blends to write stories based on 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch.'

In other lessons, teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to capture pupils' enthusiasm and find interesting ways to help them apply their knowledge and skills across a range of subjects. A project on Ancient Egypt involved pupils reflecting on the story of 'The Secret of the Sacred Scarab', and writing their own exciting adventure story. They applied their knowledge of mathematical shapes to construct pyramids and to make three-dimensional models to represent the story. In mathematics, learning was made real by giving pupils the opportunity to use their knowledge of coordinates and positive and negative numbers to solve the problem of finding ships and submarines at sea. A visit to the local sewage treatment works added much to pupils' scientific and geographical knowledge. Their reports of the visit demonstrated high level skills in using paragraphs and report writing.

Teachers give frequent feedback to pupils about what they do well and what they need to do to improve. Lessons are amended daily to offer further challenge or to provide additional guidance to pupils in correcting misunderstandings. Pupils know their levels of attainment, and have challenging targets to reach. Skilled teaching assistants provide very effective individualised support to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and to those who are new to speaking English, so that they can achieve highly.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' exemplary behaviour makes an exceptional contribution to the safe atmosphere. Teachers manage behaviour very well through the provision of highly engaging activities. Consequently, pupils work with commitment and show courtesy and respect to one another, and to adults in and out of lessons. Their enthusiastic and mature attitudes to learning allow teachers to support those having difficulty without interruption. Through their determination to do their best, pupils make the most of their learning time and cover a lot of ground in each lesson.

In discussions, pupils in Year 6 showed how much they value the differing opinions of their classmates. They explained how they use phrases such as, 'I understand what you are saying, but have you another idea.....I also think.., what do you think?..' when taking part in debates in class, or seeking out the views of pupils across the school about the ways to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

Parents, carers, pupils, staff and representatives of the governing body consider that the behaviour observed during the inspection is typical. They view the atmosphere in school as a happy and secure one. Pupils say that occasionally someone does not behave as well as they might, because they are not perfect. Pupils are taught about different kinds of bullying and how to stay safe on the internet. Acts of bullying are rare, and the very few pupils affected in the past said this consisted of name calling. They say they prefer initially to sort things out for themselves or to use their 'peer mentors'. If they cannot settle the problem an adult helps them to resolve it positively. The number of fixed-term exclusions in the past three years is minimal.

Pupils have excellent knowledge of how to stay safe. Lessons in personal, social and health education and attendance at events run by the police, fire and ambulance services give them a comprehensive picture of the risks they might face and how to avoid or deal with them. Levels of attendance and punctuality are high.

Leadership and management

Leaders, managers, members of the governing body and all staff work in very close partnership, challenging and supporting one another to bring about important improvements. They involve parents, carers and pupils in evaluating the school's effectiveness and what it should do to improve. Recent consultations have resulted in the provision of a wider range of sports and improved methods of communication between home and school.

On the basis of their track record since the previous inspection, the school has an outstanding capacity to improve further. Outstanding elements of the school's provision identified in 2006 in the curriculum, music, pupils' personal development, and behaviour have been sustained. Attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 2 and Year 6 has improved significantly because the quality

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of teaching and the rate of pupils' progress are now also outstanding. Parents and carers are extremely supportive of the work pupils are asked to do at home, and this too contributes to their high rate of progress.

All staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are held accountable for pupils' progress. Initiatives and training to raise skills in teaching reading, writing and mathematics have had a significant positive impact on the quality of teaching and raised pupils' attainment. Recent training to enhance skills in developing pupils' spoken language is proving successful in some classes, but has yet to be fully implemented by all staff. Performance management procedures and regular, informal monitoring of the quality of teaching has enabled teachers to refine and improve their practice.

A rich curriculum full of memorable experiences meets pupils differing needs and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development strongly. The emphasis on teaching core skills in communication, reading, writing, mathematics and science is supplemented by creative and performing arts, sport, philosophy, thinking skills, and French. Music is a particular strength that has led to a national award. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 sing four part harmonies with outstanding clarity and expression accompanied by their classmates who play woodwind, brass, percussion and stringed instruments very well. Using a wide range of media and materials pupils express their individuality and creativity, as well as working in the style of Hockney or African artists.

The governing body ensures that its arrangements for safeguarding pupils are implemented thoroughly. Policies and procedures are reviewed regularly and training is up-to-date. Equality of opportunity is central to the school's work. It is fully inclusive. The progress of each individual is checked frequently and action taken to offer greater challenge or overcome underachievement.

Glossary

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. |
| 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 | 46 | 46 | 8 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 8 | 47 | 40 | 5 |
| Secondary schools | 14 | 38 | 40 | 8 |
| Special schools | 28 | 48 | 20 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 15 | 50 | 29 | 5 |
| All schools | 11 | 46 | 38 | 6 |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Attendance | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance. |
| Behaviour | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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: | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. |
| 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. |
| Safety | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning. |

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.



30 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Ipswich, IP4 4BA

Thank you for making us very welcome when we visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed our discussions with you. You told us you particularly appreciate the way everyone contributes their ideas to making the school better or to celebrate special events. At the moment you are thinking of ways to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. You told us you really like coming to school as there are so many interesting things to do and find out. You read and write extremely well. Your stories about 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch' and your persuasive arguments about whether animals should be used in medical research really caught our interest. We noticed that you know your times tables and these help you calculate quickly. You also know many ways to solve complicated mathematical problems. You told us that the exemplary behaviour we saw is typical but that no-one is perfect. If you fall out with one another you try to sort it out for yourselves or ask the peer mentors to help. An adult always helps you if it does not work out.

You go to an outstanding school. Everyone wants you to be as successful as you can be and gain many skills that will help you in your future life and when you go to secondary school. In addition to achieving really well in reading, writing and mathematics, you are extremely creative and sing and play musical instruments exceptionally well. Your lessons in thinking skills and philosophy help you to communicate different ideas and points of view and those in personal, social and health education enable you to know how to stay safe.

Even outstanding schools can do something better. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 also enjoy many exciting activities to help them to learn. We have asked the teachers in these year groups to use what they have learned on recent training courses to help the younger pupils acquire a wider vocabulary and express their ideas more confidently.

Yours sincerely

Kath Beck
Lead inspector

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