

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112020
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	337818
Inspection dates	13–14 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Lindsell
Headteacher	Kevin Storey
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 14 lessons taught by 11 members of staff, and held meetings with staff, governors and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including that relating to pupils' attainment and progress, development planning and management and safeguarding of pupils. The responses to questionnaires completed by pupils and by 73 parents and carers were analysed.

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

- pupils' attainment and progress, especially in writing in Years 1 and 2 and in mathematics across the school
- pupils' personal development, including their attendance, to see if it is better than the school assesses
- the quality of teaching and learning, especially the use of literacy and problem-solving skills, and the pace of lessons
- the impact of the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage on their achievement.

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average-size school serves the local community and the children of Catholic families from a wider area. This latter group currently comprise about one quarter of the pupils. Almost all the pupils are of White British or Cornish ethnicity. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly physical disabilities or moderate learning difficulties, is a little below average.

At the time of the inspection a major building project, to provide new accommodation for the Early Years Foundation Stage, was in progress. This is due for completion in September 2010.

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

A notable feature of this good school is the welcoming atmosphere engendered by its friendly, articulate and well-behaved pupils. This in turn reflects their exceptional spiritual, moral and social development, which is brought about by the school's strong Christian ethos. In an excellent example of this, Year 6 pupils, who are about to leave the school, attended a retreat at the local church centre, where they were encouraged to reflect on their lives to date and articulate their hopes for their future at secondary school and beyond. Further to this, pupils also make an outstanding contribution to the local community, both through involvement in church and other local events and in caring for each other and their environment, for example in maintaining the school gardens. Pupils and their parents and carers rightly feel that they are very safe at school, and they have an excellent understanding of their own and each other's safety, for example when using the internet or playing at local beaches. Overall, taking into account pupils' good achievement and the four exceptionally successful elements of pupils' personal development, the overall outcomes for pupils are outstanding.

All groups of pupils make good progress in their learning throughout the school and by the end of Year 6 are attaining standards that are above average in most subjects, including mathematics. In English, standards are high. A recently published book of fascinating and often amusing stories, written by pupils in Years 3 to 6, not only shows their progress and the high quality of their writing, but also celebrates their diversity and wide range of experiences.

This good progress is brought about by consistently good teaching. Lessons are planned well, both to meet the needs of individuals and to encourage pupils to learn and apply new skills in a variety of contexts, such as when Year 6 designed their own theme park. While assessment is used well to assess pupils' progress, the use of marking and other feedback to help individuals to improve their work is less consistent. Some pupils themselves recognise this as a relative weakness in the otherwise good provision. In the good Early Years Foundation Stage, while assessment is used well to track progress in children's communication and mathematical skills, it is used less well to help develop other aspects such as their social skills.

Pupils are well known to staff as individuals and receive good care, guidance and support. While the school's efforts have improved pupils' attendance to broadly average, leaders, managers and governors recognise that this remains a relative

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weakness and that efforts to improve it further need to be redoubled. Nevertheless, this recognition demonstrates their good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The ambition and drive of the headteacher during his two years in the post have motivated staff to raise standards and improve pupils' progress, especially in English, to improve teaching and, with the support of governors, to bring to fruition an ambitious project to build much-needed new facilities for the Early Years Foundation Stage. These successes demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance by:
 - monitoring closely the attendance of individuals and groups of pupils and responding quickly to any evidence of decline
 - using the full range of available strategies to promote high attendance.
- Improve the consistency of the use of assessment to enable individual children and pupils to improve their work by:
 - ensuring that marking and verbal feedback consistently show pupils how to improve their work
 - in the Early Years Foundation Stage, extending the already effective assessment of children's progress in developing their communication and mathematical skills to other areas of their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Children start school with levels of skill and knowledge below those expected. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and start in Year 1 showing levels of attainment that are broadly average, although they are higher in communication and mathematical skills than in other areas of their learning. Throughout Years 1 to 6, pupils make good progress. For example in Year 2, pupils used their good literacy and numeracy skills to survey and record their classmates' preferences such as for fruit or TV programmes. They could frame intelligent questions to evaluate their data, such as, 'How many more people prefer strawberries than prefer apples?' This is an advanced skill for pupils of this age. In Year 3, pupils investigated the number seven in a variety of ways. One group created a set of division sums giving the answer seven. This enabled the more able to see the importance of patterns of numbers in understanding mathematics. In Year 6, after watching a film clip about the new 'Harry Potter' theme park, pupils excitedly discussed key features of their own plans for a theme park. This contributed very well to their preparation for later life in developing their skills of working as part of a team, applying design and literacy skills, and in developing their economic understanding. In these and other learning activities, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make equally good progress, often because of good support from teaching assistants.

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Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of exercise and a healthy diet. On Fridays, only fruit is allowed as a snack. On other days, however, pupils enjoy a variety of snacks at break time, some of which might be considered as not very healthy. Pupils are very considerate and behaviour in and out of lessons is excellent, especially so as the play space is temporarily restricted by building works. Pupils told inspectors that there was no bullying, just occasional over-excitement or silliness. They value the developing diversity of their school community and have a very good understanding of other faiths and cultures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers demonstrate consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work rate. Resources, including information and communication technology (ICT) and teaching assistants, are used well to make lessons interesting and support learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge, as shown when encouraging pupils to identify mathematical patterns. Subjects are linked together well, especially in giving pupils opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills, although leaders and managers recognise that there is more to do in ensuring that this approach fully reflects pupils' progress in their learning, so that tasks become ever more challenging. There is a good range of additional activities such as trips, music, sport and clubs. While the school is effective at promoting high achievement among more academically able pupils, there are few additional opportunities for those with other

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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particular gifts and talents, and this is a legitimate concern of a few parents and carers.

Pupils are cared for well and there are good links with parents, carers, external agencies and other schools. Pupils are supported well when moving from one stage of education to the next. While recent initiatives, such as the appointment of a parent support adviser, are leading to improvements in attendance, attendance is not sufficiently well monitored over time to detect early signs of potential problems, and the school is reluctant to use the more robust strategies available to tackle individual cases of poor attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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 headteacher has revitalised the school and, together with the governing body and other staff, has a clear vision for its future development. Leaders' monitoring and evaluation are mainly rigorous and accurate, and the monitoring of pupils' progress and planning to improve any slower progress are especially effective. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching and learning has improved to be consistently good and this is reflected in pupils' better progress and higher attainment. While there has been some improvement in attendance, monitoring and evaluation have had less impact in this area.

The effective and experienced governing body both challenges and supports the school well. There are good arrangements to ensure the safety of children. All requirements are in place and some, such as those for risk assessment and first aid, exceed the minimum requirements; child protection and safeguarding procedures are good. Leaders show a good commitment to promoting equality of opportunity. This is shown, for example, in the book of pupils' family stories, which celebrates the rich diversity of the school community. Any potential discrimination is tackled effectively, although opportunities for those with special gifts and talents need broadening. Governors are committed to promoting community cohesion and have an excellent impact within the local community. They are aware that national and global links are less well developed and have plans to address this. Because of the outstanding outcomes achieved, the school provides excellent value for money.

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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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. Their behaviour is outstanding and they clearly enjoy the activities, as when programming a robot to move around a road map. They have a very good understanding of safety and carry out their own risk assessments. They are visited by 'Dave the Builder', who talked about safety near the building site. The limited space available during the building of the new facility for the two classes is organised effectively. Children move freely between the indoor and outdoor areas, but have less opportunity to choose their own activities than they might. Assessment is very effective in identifying and developing children's communication and mathematical skills, but is less effective in promoting the other areas of learning such as physical and creative development. The provision is well led and staff know and care for the children well, a fact appreciated by parents and carers and giving a firm foundation to the good relationships that exist between them and the staff. Staff, parents, carers and children are rightly looking forward with anticipation and excitement to the opening of their new facility.

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

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Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire were very positive about the school. 'Our child has made huge progress and loves school', is a typical comment. All respondents agreed their child is kept safe and that the teaching is good. Inspectors agree with these positive views. A few parents or carers expressed concerns about issues such as the management of behaviour, and whether their child's needs were met. Inspectors found that pupils behave outstandingly well and individual needs are usually well met. However, while the school is successful in promoting high achievement among more able pupils, we agree with a few parents or carers who feel that specialist provision for those with particular gifts and talents might be broadened.

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 73 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 208 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	55	31	42	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	48	66	25	34	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	52	32	44	0	0	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	48	33	45	2	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	39	53	34	47	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	34	45	62	2	3	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	34	47	64	1	1	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)	26	36	46	63	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	40	40	55	3	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	40	36	49	5	7	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	33	43	59	3	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	33	45	36	49	2	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	56	29	40	2	3	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 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	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). 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"> ■ 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 pupils' 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.

18 August 2010

Dear Pupils



Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bodmin PL31 1LW

We very much enjoyed meeting you and talking to you when we visited your school recently. You are confident, can express yourselves well and are very friendly young people. I agree with you and your parents that yours is a good school. These are some of the good things about it.

- You all really enjoy school and make good progress. In Year 6 you reach standards that are above average. You are especially good at English, and I loved your book 'We are Writers!' It shows that you are brilliant writers with really interesting stories to tell.
- Overall, what you achieve is excellent. This includes your behaviour, what you do for other people, and the way you are starting to understand important things about life.
- You are very good at keeping yourselves safe and know how to keep healthy, although crisps and muffins are not the best things to eat at break time!
- Teaching and learning are good and you have interesting things to do, like when Year 6 were designing their theme parks.
- You do a lot for the community in and out of school and your links with the church give you the opportunity to think about life and plan for your future.
- Your headteacher, the staff and governors lead the school well.

I have asked that school to do two things to make it even better.

- Some of you don't always come to school as often as you should and this needs to be improved. You can help by making sure you always come to school except when you are ill.
- We have asked teachers to tell you more about how you are getting on and how to improve your work, when talking to you or marking it. We first picked this point up because some of you mentioned it in your answers to our questionnaire.

Best wishes for the future. Continue to work hard and enjoy school.

Yours sincerely

Paul Sadler, Lead Inspector

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