

St Mary's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131909
Local Authority	Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number	293884
Inspection date	28 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Graeme Clarke

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 on roll	
School	191
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jim McParland
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Lemmon
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2003
School address	Tennyson Avenue Grangetown Middlesbrough TS6 7AD
Telephone number	01642 455309
Fax number	01642 458078

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Mary's is a broadly average size primary school with a Nursery. It serves mainly Roman Catholic families from the Grangetown locality, parts of which are very deprived. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average. An above average proportion has learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although the number of pupils with statements of special educational needs is relatively low. Almost all pupils are from a White British heritage and none are learning English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Mary's is an outstanding school where children thrive. Under the headteacher's excellent leadership, all staff foster the school's Christian ethos and a clear philosophy that, here, every child does matter and will be helped to develop and learn as well as they can. This is an exceptionally inclusive school in which children's accomplishments reflect outstanding achievement and personal development. Parents have total confidence in the school and hold the care and education it provides in exceptionally high regard. One parent's comment sums up their views: 'My daughter has really settled in ... Since coming to this school she is really enjoying herself and loves the staff, and I feel all the staff are really friendly and pleasant.'

From very low starting points, children make outstanding progress in most areas of learning in the Foundation Stage, although standards at the end are still below those expected for children of the same age. A new and very effective approach helps them make remarkable progress in their communication and language development compared with previous years. This gives them a good base for the school to build on in Year 1. The slightly above average standards at the end of Year 2 in 2006 were a big improvement on earlier years. Results this year show another improvement. Year 6 pupils gained significantly above average standards in 2006, echoing the position of previous years. Year-on-year, given their backgrounds and starting points, pupils' achievement is outstanding.

Pupils are exceptionally well behaved and act safely and sensibly. They thoroughly enjoy school, work very enthusiastically, and are delighted when they do well and happily share the success of others. They learn about the importance of personal hygiene, healthy food and drinking water, and willingly take part in physical activities. The school community benefits from their contribution, and they contribute to the wider community through charitable work. They rapidly grow in confidence and are ready to move on to secondary education where their good basic skills stand them in good stead.

Governors play a very effective role in ensuring the school is outstandingly managed and administered. The headteacher and her senior team are very successful in promoting pupils' achievements and development through good, and often outstanding, teaching along with an exceptionally well managed, rich curriculum and outstanding care, guidance and support. Many teachers help pupils know how well they are doing, and how to take their next steps in their learning, but these approaches are not consistent throughout the school. Governors and staff carefully review and judge the quality of the school's work and, although modest when making these judgements, they accurately identify areas for improvement. The school has very effectively addressed the issues raised at the last inspection and has continued to foster improvement since then. The track record of improvement and the systematic way senior leaders manage the school; the outstanding personal development of the children; and the excellent progress they make, demonstrate outstanding value for money. The school has an outstanding capacity for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the use of techniques to help pupils know how well they are learning, and how to take their next steps, consistently throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and standards are high. Children's starting points when they begin Nursery are exceptionally low in comparison to those of most children of the same age. Of special note is the remarkable progress they now make in communication and language development. A very effectively managed new approach, using phonics to link sounds and letters and develop writing, has led to much higher standards than in previous years. It provides a good base for the school to build on in Year 1. Children make outstanding progress in most other areas of learning, although standards at the end of the Foundation Stage are still below average for children of the same age.

Pupils in Key Stage 1 continue to make excellent progress. In 2006 the results of the school's assessments in Year 2 were slightly above average. Results this year show a marginal rise from last year, which consolidates the big improvement in 2006. Almost every pupil in Key Stage 2 also made outstanding progress and did much better than expected on the basis of their Year 2 tests. Their attainments were significantly higher than those nationally, especially in mathematics. Boys do not do quite as well as girls in English. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also achieve exceptionally well to attain much higher results than their counterparts elsewhere.

Of particular note is the exceptionally good value the school adds to pupils' knowledge and understanding. Much of this success stems from the diligent way the school tracks pupils' progress and gives effective support to help those at risk of not doing as well as they should. Information from assessing the current Year 6 pupils' work shows they are well on course to meet the school's statutory targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding. Pupils respect and value the achievements of others, and thoroughly enjoy their own accomplishments, which are often displayed to excellent effect in classrooms and the hall. They take part in practical activities with enthusiasm, become engrossed in creative work, and sing heartily in choirs. Attendance is broadly average and, as a result of successful partnership work with parents, it is improving. Pupils are impeccably well behaved and conduct themselves safely and sensibly. They pay close attention to their teachers and teaching assistants, and quickly learn and follow the routines necessary for orderly behaviour. They are polite and can easily hold conversations with adults. Pupils successfully learn about personal hygiene, the importance of healthy food, and willingly and energetically take part in physical activities, such as the tap-dancing club after school. They make a considerable contribution to their school community, for example as play leaders to promote friendship, and as Eco-councillors to improve the school environment. They also help in the local community through theatrical productions, and through extensive charitable work. Many show they can learn well in small groups or on their own. This, together with their good basic and information technology skills, prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils learn very well as a result of outstanding teaching. Strengths come from diligently planning sessions in which teachers' knowledge of each pupil's abilities is used when designing activities to foster their progress. Work is adapted well to suit pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or to extend the learning of gifted and talented pupils. Teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants all play their parts together. In the Foundation Stage, adult-directed activities result in well-managed learning and well-established classroom routines. This, in turn, leads to the children's excellent progress. Older pupils work very industriously and learn very well in fast paced lessons with challenging activities. Teachers check their progress thoroughly, give effective support when needed, and use time well to reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding. In many lessons teachers share the purpose of the lesson with pupils at the beginning, and show them how to check their learning at the end. This process is very effective in helping pupils know how well they are doing. Teachers mark pupils' work diligently and positively; their comments let pupils know where they have been successful, but they do not always inform pupils about what needs to be done to improve further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's outstanding curriculum contributes immensely to pupils' enjoyment and achievement. Central to its success is the way it is adapted to suit local circumstances and pupils' needs. Children in the Foundation Stage are helped to learn exceptionally well through very good first-hand purposeful activities which are either effectively directed by adults, or which allow the children a modicum of choice. A well-designed programme of National Curriculum subjects and personal, social and health education, evident throughout school life, enables pupils to become excellent learners. Pupils know about and respect other people's faiths and lifestyles through their work in religious education, art and music. Educational outings, such as to local residential outdoor centres, and visitors' contributions add to the richness of experience. Involvement in large group activities, such as the choir, and theatrical productions such as pantomime, and the part that school assemblies play, make a huge contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many pupils participate in a very wide range of after-school activities, including sport, music, and dance, which contribute well to their social and physical development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The atmosphere in the school is welcoming, caring and purposeful, and stems from the excellent care, guidance and support pupils receive. Secure procedures, which meet government requirements, safeguard children and routines for child protection and health and safety are thorough and fully in place. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very effective support and the school ensures that partnerships with outside agencies, which usefully draw upon their expertise and services, are very successful, as are links with parents. Very good procedures ensure children settle quickly into school and these are greatly appreciated by parents. Arrangements in partnership with local secondary schools ensure pupils are well prepared for a smooth transition when they leave. The school diligently collects information

about pupils' attainments and progress during the year, and uses it well to support their learning. For example, there are effective arrangements to set appropriate and often challenging targets, and to help pupils at risk of falling behind by using computer programmes to support writing and mathematics. Booster classes for pupils and parents are also successful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management play a crucial part in promoting the Christian ethos and very positive climate for learning throughout the school. The headteacher shows great commitment and determination to improve the school more and more, and she and the governors diligently analyse and review pupils' work and all aspects of school life. Senior leaders greatly enhance this process. Governors are fully involved in partnership with the headteacher and other staff to have a very clear knowledge of the school. A particularly strong feature is the high priority governors give to ensuring that the quality of all the staff's work is carefully monitored, and that they continue to enhance their skills through training and support. Such high quality leadership and management is entirely responsible for the way the school has successfully addressed all issues raised at the last inspection, and led to pupils achieving exceptionally well year-by-year since then.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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 the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

29 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's RC Primary School, Middlesbrough, TS6 7AD.

I really enjoyed my visit to your school. Thank you for helping me when I came into your classrooms to see you at work. You were really helpful and very polite. I was very impressed with those of you whom I met and I did enjoy talking to you. It was great to see how much you enjoy coming to school and how you enjoy school life. I know the headteacher and the staff are all very proud of you.

Your school is very warm and welcoming and is very well organised. I'm pleased that you are safe and happy because Mrs Lemmon and all the adults in the school look after you very, very well. I liked the way you work hard, and to see you taking part in all the activities and having fun. Some of the things you do are very impressive – I really liked hearing your choir sing so many different kinds of songs for your parents; and in the nursery the way some of you are learning letters and sounds to spell words. I've asked Mrs Lemmon to help you to learn more about reading and writing; and to help you know more about how well you are doing and the next steps you can take to do even better.

Some of you will soon leave at the end of this year to join a new school. You have very many opportunities at St Mary's to learn about life and these should stand you in good stead for the future. I hope that you all do really well.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Clarke

Lead Inspector