

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118059
Local authority	North East Lincolnshire
Inspection number	379532
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2012
Lead inspector	John Foster

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	248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Ducey
Headteacher	Greg Marsden
Date of previous school inspection	2 October 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Foster
Lynne Davies

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 12 lessons involving seven teachers. Approximately 10 hours were spent in the direct observation of pupils' learning. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, looking at a range of documentation including development planning, that relating to safeguarding, minutes of the governing body's meetings, pupils' records and school policies. Inspectors analysed 48 parents' and carers' questionnaires along with those of pupils and staff.

Information about the school

St Mary's is an average size primary school. About 80% of pupils are of White British heritage, with the remaining pupils being from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, predominantly of Eastern European origin. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is well above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is well above average. The school holds the following awards: The Basic Skills Mark; Artsmark; Healthy School status and Information and Communications Technology Mark.

The school does not meet the current floor standard. Since the previous inspection, the school has been designated as part of a soft federation of schools, linked to a nearby Church of England (CE) primary school. The executive headteacher is the substantive headteacher of the CE school, with the substantive deputy headteachers of St Mary's and the CE school as the Heads of School. There have been many changes of staff, with about one third of the teaching staff having changed since the federation was formed.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Although it is improving, it is not yet a good school because pupils' attainment remains below average and the recently-introduced curriculum has not had time to impact sufficiently on raising pupils' attainment.
- From starting points that are low, pupils make satisfactory progress overall as they move through the school. Children get a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and develop skills and knowledge well. Pupils' attainment has been low at the end of both Key Stages, but there are signs that it is improving rapidly and at Key Stage 1 the gap in achievement with national averages is narrowing. This picture is reflected in Years 3 and Year 4. While pupils in Years 5 and Year 6 currently make good progress because they are taught particularly well, their attainment remains below average.
- The quality of teaching varies across the school but overall it is good. In the best lessons, pupils are highly motivated to learn because, as they told inspectors, 'learning is fun.' On rare occasions when teaching is not as effective, pupils become restless, their concentration wavers and learning slows.
- Pupils' behaviour overall is good and for much of the time it is exemplary. Pupils are caring, polite and hard-working. They care for each other well. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy school and feel safe at all times.
- Leadership and management are good. The establishment of the federation, with strong leadership by the executive headteacher, has moved the school forward at a rapid pace. Better quality monitoring of the school's performance, of teaching and learning and the effective ways that the findings have been acted upon, have led to pupils' currently making better progress than previously. Members of the governing body challenge and support the school and headteacher well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This reflects the school's overall ethos well.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good or outstanding in all lessons
 - giving subject leaders the opportunity to monitor teaching and learning at first hand
 - ensuring that teachers' marking always gives pupils a clear understanding of how their work can be improved.

- Improve the quality of the curriculum by:
 - embedding the newly-developed curriculum into the school's work so that it is fully relevant to pupils' needs
 - ensuring that activities in all lessons engage and motivate pupils to learn and to consolidate and develop their basic skills.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

When they start in the nursery, what children know and can do is low. They are taught well while in Early Years Foundation Stage, making good progress in developing skills and knowledge, although when they reach Year 1, their attainment is still below that expected. Although attainment at the end of both Key Stages has been below average in the past, pupils are now making better progress and attainment is beginning to rise securely and quickly, closing the gap with national averages. The changes in teaching personnel and more effective monitoring of teaching have led to an improvement in pupils' learning. Inspection findings show that almost all pupils, including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English, make good progress. This has yet to impact on pupils' attainment overall, which remains below national levels at the end of Key Stage 2. The Year 6 cohort has experienced many disturbances during their time at the school. As a result, their learning and progress have been slower than it might have been. Lesson observations and scrutiny of their work show that they are currently making good progress because of the high-quality teaching they receive that is helping secure more rapid gains in their learning. Year 6 pupils are on course to meet their targets in English and mathematics.

Pupils make better rates of progress in lessons where the teaching inspires them to work hard, concentrate and gives them guidance about how their work can be improved. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils were learning how to calculate the area of a shape. They started by counting the centimetre squares within the shape, but rapidly realised that they could work out a formula to aid their calculations. Learning moved at a fast pace when they were asked to calculate the areas of irregular shapes. In a Year 6 literacy lesson, where the teaching was outstanding, pupils worked collaboratively on producing information text. The teacher posed challenging questions and the pupils reacted well to them, recognising what they had to do in order to meet the learning objectives set by the teacher.

Most pupils are keen readers. By the end of Year 2 pupils' attainment in reading is below average and by the end of Year 6 it is broadly average. The school has devised its own arrangements for teaching phonics (linking letters with sounds) and is undertaken as a whole-school activity.

Most parents and carers believe that their children make good progress. Inspectors found that progress is improving at a fast rate and for pupils in school currently it is good, but that over time it has been satisfactory.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good overall. Effective monitoring of teaching and learning by the senior leadership team has helped to improve the quality of teaching across the school. The higher quality teaching is having a very positive effect on pupils' learning so that they are making faster rates of progress than in the past. Teachers plan to a common format, identifying what needs to be taught for the different ability levels within their classes. This helps pupils to develop at their own rate, but allows teachers to challenge them well to improve. The excellent relationships that exist between pupils and between pupils and adults are a vital aspect of lessons observed. Teachers encourage their pupils to be self-analytical and to assess their own work. This is successful in most classes, particularly for the older pupils. They know at which National Curriculum level they are working and often know what needs to be done to reach the next level. Where teaching is of a lower quality, the pace of lessons is slower and pupils are not as motivated to learn. In these lessons, teachers' explanations of what they need the pupils to do are not clear enough, so that pupils are not sure what is expected of them. In most lessons, teaching assistants' skills are used well to give specific help to individuals and groups within the class. Support for the large group of pupils whose first language is not English is good.

Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is variable in accuracy and helpfulness, but is satisfactory overall. At its best, teachers mark pupils' work carefully, giving due praise where it is needed and identifying what pupils should do to improve their work. This is inconsistent across the school so that in some classes pupils are not always given strong enough guidance for improvement.

Pupils are encouraged to work together in most lessons and this is an important element in the improving progress across the school. They support each other well and this has a positive effect on their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Within the planned curriculum pupils are given opportunities to develop their numeracy and literacy skills in other subjects, although this is not consistently undertaken in all lessons. Most parents, carers and pupils believe that the teaching is good and this view is supported by inspectors.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is typically good overall and for much of the time it is outstanding. They behave well, not simply because they are told to do so, but because they recognise that this is what they should do to be fair to others in the school community. On the few occasions when behaviour is not as good as it could be, pupils become disengaged in their learning and become restless. For most of the time, pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning help them towards good progress. A large majority of parents and carers consider that

behaviour is good and does not disrupt their children's learning, and that their children feel safe. Inspectors agree with parents' and carers' view.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel totally safe in school. When asked whether there was any bullying they were adamant that, 'There is no bullying at our school!' Pupils show a good understanding of different types of bullying. They were keen to point out that should it ever occur, the staff would deal with it quickly and effectively. As one pupil said, 'I have been to three schools and this is the best one.'

Current data show that attendance is broadly average. There are efficient procedures in place to track absences and the school places great importance on pupils being in school on time.

Leadership and management

The development of the federation has been an important factor in the school's positive development. The close links with the federated CE school have had a significant impact on St Mary's improvement. The senior leadership team works closely together with each member's skills complementing those of other members. Effective monitoring of its performance by the senior leadership team and middle managers, has enabled the school to identify where its strengths lie, alongside areas where improvements are needed. These identified areas for improvement have been used to devise and implement a focussed plan for the school's future development. An important aspect of the school's monitoring relates to the quality of teaching and learning. The senior leadership team undertakes regular focussed lesson observations alongside unannounced observations. Together with effective professional development, the outcomes of these observations have been used successfully to help the teachers to improve their practice. However, the subject leaders for English and mathematics do not undertake direct observations of teaching and learning in their subjects. Governance is good. Members of the governing body visit the school regularly and not only challenge, but work alongside the senior leadership team to ensure that pupils are given the best possible opportunities during their time at the school. They are fully involved in monitoring the school's performance and in planning for its future. As a result of the improvements made, rising attainment and good teaching, the school is in a good position to sustain its improvement. Systems are firmly in place to monitor pupils' progress. The systems are such that staff can readily identify when individual pupils are not making enough progress so that they can be given focussed support. This is done very effectively.

The curriculum is satisfactory. A newly-devised curriculum has recently been introduced to cater more effectively for pupils' needs and interests. The school is trialling it during the current year and it has been successful to date in engaging pupils. The school recognises that more work needs to be done to fully embed it into its practice in order for it to be more effective in raising attainment. Secure plans are in place to evaluate its effectiveness and make adjustments. The school provides a good range of activities beyond the school day to enhance pupils' learning and they participate eagerly.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's Catholic ethos underpins all its work. There is a high degree of spirituality within the school. Pupils' excellent social and moral development stem from the high expectations of the staff and the collaborative work pupils undertake in most lessons. Pupils' welfare is paramount. Safeguarding arrangements are secure, meeting all statutory requirements. The governing

body ensures equality of opportunities for all groups of pupils and that there is no discrimination, thus ensuring a harmonious school community.

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.
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.



26 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Grimsby, DN32 7JX

Thank you for the welcome you gave the inspectors when we came to visit your school recently. I would like to thank you for the help you gave us with our work and let you know what we found out about your school.

The school provides you with a satisfactory education. There are some good aspects to your school also. By the time you leave St Mary's, your attainment in English and mathematics is not yet high enough. There have been some important improvements recently and you are now taught well in most lessons. This means that you are making much better progress and your attainment is quickly getting closer to what is expected. You told us that you feel safe in school, that there is no bullying and you all get on well together. This is evident from your good, and at times, excellent behaviour. This is reflected in your outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many of you told us that you really enjoy school because the teachers make the lessons fun. Some of you do not attend school regularly and this holds up your learning.

The headteacher, staff and governors care for you well and ensure that you are kept safe in school. They keep a close check on what is happening in school and have devised good plans to improve it still further.

In order to make the school even better, the inspectors have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to:

- help you to reach higher standards in English and mathematics
- ensure that the new, creative curriculum is used well to help you to make progress in all subjects.

You can help by continuing to work hard and by attending school regularly.

Yours sincerely,

John Foster
Lead Inspector

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