

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Crewe

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111342
Local Authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	356895
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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	600
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Wimpenny
Headteacher	Mrs S Fau-Goodwin
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 24 lessons and saw 19 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of staff and the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including that relating to safeguarding, governing body meetings, school policies, national and school assessment data as well as samples of pupils' work. Also taken into account were 250 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as those completed by pupils and members of staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether all pupils, particularly those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, make the progress they should.
- Whether good teaching is consistent throughout the school.
- How effectively senior and middle managers contribute to the school's drive for improvement.

Information about the school

This is a much larger than average sized primary school in which the large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. About one quarter of the pupils is from the settled Polish community. More pupils than is usual join the school part-way through their primary education in Key Stages 1 and 2. A significant number speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. Fewer than average are known to be eligible for free school meals.

Additional care is provided by the governing body through breakfast and after-school clubs on site, as well as provision during school holidays.

The school has achieved several awards for curriculum development. Among the most recent are the Rights Respecting School (UNICEF) award, Activemark and Healthy School status.

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

This is a good school. Significant improvements have been made, since the last inspection, in key areas of the school's work. This is because of the strong impact of the leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher and the effective support of the staff and the governing body.

The good start provided for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has recently been improved by development of the outdoor area for the Nursery. Children enter Nursery with skills and abilities that are generally below those expected for their age. The very strong promotion of language development through the Every Child a Talker initiative is particularly beneficial to children who speak English as an additional language and enriches the first-class bilingual support provided. Children make good progress and most work securely in line with expectations when they leave the Reception year.

Good progress continues throughout the school for all pupils because of consistently good, and at times outstanding, teaching and learning in lessons. Teachers use assessment well to plan for all abilities and set clear targets. Nevertheless while literacy work is generally marked well, the quality is not matched in other subjects so pupils are not always sure about next steps for improvement. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are exceptionally well provided for through very carefully tailored planning, rigorous monitoring, and constant dialogue with parents and carers. Consequently, most make good and some make rapid progress. Attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is above average.

The curriculum engages pupils well. They enjoy especially the developing links between subjects because they give more purpose to learning. The school is aware that the next step is to identify more precisely the skills to be learned and developed across subjects as pupils move through the school.

Pupils' good personal development is underpinned by outstanding provision of care, guidance and support. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what it means to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They are mindful of one another and their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' personal skills are encouraged effectively through well-managed before- and after-school provision which gives them opportunities to make choices, work together and plan their own activities.

Leaders and managers at all levels contribute effectively to the school's accurate self-evaluation and subsequent drive for improvement. While improving their own leadership skills since the last inspection, they have successfully overseen rising attainment and accelerating progress, and improved teaching quality and provision of care, guidance and support. They have moved St Mary's from a satisfactory to a good school and have amply demonstrated good capacity for sustained improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning further by:
 - more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of marking quality across all subjects
 - ensuring that curriculum planning clearly identifies the skills to be learned and developed as pupils progress through the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' good behaviour and attentiveness in lessons contribute significantly to their good learning and achievement. They respond well to challenges in lessons and are eager to succeed. A good example of this was seen in a Year 6 mathematics lesson when pupils concentrated intensely on working out a number sequence, then applied their knowledge of numbers to discover further patterns within the sequence that they had just completed. Pupils answer confidently when questioned about their learning and enjoy opportunities to work with partners when solving problems. They understand the targets which have been set for them. The consensus of opinion among pupils is that 'lessons are enjoyable and learning is fun'.

Progress has gathered pace over the past two years and brought about a rising trend in attainment, which is currently above average at both Key Stages. School tracking data and pupils' work indicate that above-average attainment is likely to be sustained and that there is consistently good progress year on year. There is no underachievement. This is due, in part, to highly-effective use of assessment systems to check the rate of progress for every pupil regularly. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress largely because of the very skilful input from bilingual assistants. For example, there is always good visual support provided to help pupils understand key words and phrases and teaching assistants make sure that pupils understand what is happening in whole-class situations. By the end of Year 6 they achieve as well as their peers. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of outstanding planning, monitoring and recording of pupils' daily achievements. Their individual plans are matched very carefully to their needs. Teachers and assistants know the pupils very well and are extremely sensitive to their particular academic and emotional needs.

Pupils are polite, well-mannered and behave well around the school. They say that they feel safe in school and show good awareness of potentially dangerous situations including those linked to use of the internet. They strongly oppose bullying and racist incidents both of which are very rare. Pupils contribute well to the school community. The school council ensures that all views are taken into account. Pupil surveys give them a further chance to voice their opinions and bring about improvements, for example, to the behaviour policy and provision for information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils' good personal qualities, their attainment and above-average attendance contribute well to their good preparation for a secure economic future.

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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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

In most lessons, there is a lively pace to learning and good challenge for all groups. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and their expectations of what pupils can achieve are high. This was a particularly noticeable feature of a French lesson where well-chosen activities elicited exceptional speaking and reading skills as pupils applied the key words, expertly modelled by the teacher, which they learned in the lesson. There was clear enjoyment and a sense of achievement. Resources are used effectively to help pupils learn through active participation and teachers make good use of electronic whiteboards. Good relationships are fostered in all lessons. Pupils know that their contributions are valued, so they learn confidently. Teaching assistants provide good support. They work well with class teachers and are a much-valued part of the teaching team. Whole-school assessment systems, shared by teachers, for the management of target setting and pupils' progress are used to good effect. Literacy work is usually marked well but there are inconsistencies between classes in the quality and rigour of day-to-day marking across other subjects.

Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are well provided for within the curriculum which is, overall, well-matched to pupils' needs and enables them to achieve well. Although the newly-designed curriculum links subjects through topic work, it does not fully address the precise skills which pupils should acquire and develop each year. Nor has there been evaluation, to date, of the effectiveness of new planning. There is a good range of enrichment activities for pupils to enjoy, both within and outside of

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lesson time. Thai boxing, dance and athletics are some current favourites, as well as a popular selection of non-sporting activities.

Outstanding provision of care, guidance and support enables pupils to make good progress. Pupils say that they feel very well cared for in school because of the trusting relationships they share. Parents overwhelmingly endorse that view. Care and support for those who may be potentially most vulnerable is exceptional. The school seeks every opportunity by way of internal resources and links with outside agencies, including parents and carers, to provide the best for pupils. Concerns are acted upon immediately and progress is monitored and recorded incisively to bring improvement and assist pupils' achievement. There are very good arrangements for pupils joining the school and when moving on to the next. Systems for sharing information with parents and carers are wide-ranging and effective. Excellent provision for family learning gives helpful guidance to parents and carers about how to help their children at home. The excellent guidance for pupils is reflected in their personal responses and good achievements. Parents and carers who use the additional care provided for their children outside of normal school times are very appreciative and supportive of this aspect of the school's provision.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Through determined leadership and shared accountability the headteacher has successfully harnessed the energy and enthusiasm of staff and guided the school through a period of good improvement. Effective monitoring and evaluation have raised expectations and ambitions for the school and led to good improvement in the quality of teaching and learning but leaders recognise that the quality of marking requires more rigorous checking. The governing body equally shares the vision for the school's future success. All leaders are ambitious for every pupil. All forms of discrimination are challenged strongly and all staff strive to ensure good equality of opportunity. The governing body fulfils statutory obligations well overall. It ensures excellent support for provision for special educational needs and/or disabilities and has very good understanding and overview of good safeguarding procedures. All staff and pupils are aware of policies and procedures and their personal responsibilities. Systems regarding the protection of children are a very effective element of the school's provision of care, guidance and support. The governing body provides challenge and support that are equally strong and effectively-targeted to promote continuous progress. The school promotes community cohesion well. There are good links with sections of the local community and productive partnerships with some local schools resulting in cultural harmony. Pupils compare cultural lifestyles with others in schools in India, Australia and

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Ghana but there is some unevenness in pupils' understanding, through shared experiences, of pupils in the United Kingdom whose circumstances differ from their own.

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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good leadership and well-managed provision ensure children's good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Activities are planned well and often take account of the children's own ideas. There is a good balance between activities led by adults and those which children choose for themselves. Particularly good use is made of the outside areas, in all weathers, to encourage children's learning through exploration and play. These activities are often linked with what children learn inside. For example, counting skills were reinforced by children counting and recording the number of laps around the area that their friends did on scooters. Exciting role-play is stimulated by good use of resources. Teachers generally engage children well in activities to encourage language development and provide very well-targeted support for children who are at the early stages of learning to speak English. Occasionally however, they do not intervene quickly enough in activities where children are seen to play together but do not talk to one another. There is a good focus on teaching letters and the sounds they make and this gives children the confidence to tackle early writing by themselves. Provision for children's welfare is good. All staff are very watchful over children's well-being. Relationships with parents and carers and their involvement in their children's learning and progress are very good. Despite the excellent systems in place for observing and recording children's achievements and planning next steps, opportunities to move the more-able children on during an activity are occasionally missed.

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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

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires expressed positive views about the school. They commented typically on how much their children enjoy school and the good progress they make. A very small minority expressed concerns, largely about issues relating to progress and provision, particularly for children's additional needs. Inspectors followed up these concerns by investigating the systems in place for supporting pupils, the range of provision, the school's links with external agencies, and the quality of recording and monitoring by the school. Overall, inspectors found provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to be outstanding and their progress to be good. All issues raised were discussed with school leaders while ensuring that the anonymity of parents and carers was fully protected.

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, Crewe 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 250 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 600 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	149	60	95	38	1	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	162	65	84	34	1	0	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	133	53	106	42	6	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	131	52	105	42	9	4	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	141	56	101	40	5	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	132	53	108	43	9	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	125	50	116	46	7	3	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)	119	48	111	44	10	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	111	44	127	51	4	2	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	117	47	111	44	15	6	1	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	95	38	133	53	13	5	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	119	48	117	47	5	2	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	147	59	97	39	4	2	1	0

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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:	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. ■ 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.



23 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Crewe, Crewe, CW2 8AD

Thank you very much for the way in which you welcomed us into your school when we came to inspect it recently. We enjoyed talking to you about your work and some of the exciting things that you enjoy so much. We were greatly impressed by your politeness and good manners. You behave well and, importantly, that helps you to learn well. Well done on your above-average attendance and the excellent way in which you keep up your healthy lifestyles.

St Mary's has made good progress since its last inspection. There have been a lot of improvements and it is a good school. That is largely because the standards you reach in English and mathematics are above average and you make good progress and achieve well. There are other reasons too, of course. Your teachers teach you well and make lessons enjoyable, the grown-ups in school take excellent care of you to make sure you all do your best and some exciting ways are being planned to help you enjoy your learning even more.

We noticed how proud you are of your school, but so are your teachers, parents, carers and the governing body. They would all like to see it become even better. To help that to happen we have asked your teachers to do two things to improve your learning further. The first is to make sure that their marking in all subjects is as helpful to you as their marking of your literacy books. Secondly, to include all of the skills you will learn and use when they plan topic work and to make sure they develop as you move through the school. You can help by keeping up your good attendance and by following up all the helpful points for improvement from your teachers' marking.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Johnson

Lead Inspector

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