

St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101324
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	335696
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Merchant

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary school
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeremy Alford
Headteacher	Mel Adams
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and observed nine teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They also talked to some parents and carers who were present at the start and finish of the school day. They observed the school's work, and looked at its improvement plan, data on pupils' progress, records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching, and a range of school policies. They also analysed questionnaires received from 122 parents and carers, 56 pupils and 20 members of staff.

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

- pupils' attainment and progress, particularly boys and higher attaining pupils
- how well the teaching takes account of the needs of groups and individuals particularly boys and higher attaining pupils, and how well teachers help all pupils to improve their work
- how consistently well teachers check the progress of different groups of pupils in each year group and how well they inform them about what they need to do to improve their work
- the effectiveness of subject leaders in checking attainment, progress and teaching and of fostering improvements in the outcomes for all pupils.

Information about the school

This school is similar in size to most other primary schools. Pupils come from a diverse range of minority ethnic backgrounds and just under a half of all pupils are from White British families. The proportion of pupils at the early stages of learning English is lower than is typically found. There are below average numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals. Those pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly moderate learning difficulties, is well above average, as is the number with a statement of educational needs. Children join the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage Reception classes. The school achieved the Healthy School award and Active Mark in 2006 and there is a breakfast club managed by the governing body.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The key strength of this outstanding and improving school is the exemplary pastoral care that it offers. By the time pupils leave in Year 6 they are confident, well-rounded young people, ready to play their full part in the world beyond school. One parent summed up the views of many when saying, 'St Mary's is an excellent school which nurtures the whole child.'

Many children join the Reception class with skills and abilities that are below those expected for their age. By the end of Year 6 standards have risen considerably. All pupils from the wide range of background and abilities at the school make good progress, to reach standards that are at, and sometimes above, the national average. Pupils' personal development is outstanding because they are encouraged to see their potential and are given the self-confidence to work hard and aim high. A very positive atmosphere permeates the school, relationships are exceptionally strong and this, together with excellent care, guidance and support, results in happy learners. All adults work together extremely well to ensure that all pupils, whatever their difficulties or disabilities, are able to take full advantage of all that the school has to offer. Pupils' joy of school is palpable and is evident in the ever improving attendance rate, which is above average.

Another special feature of the school is pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This permeates all aspects of the school's work and supports pupils' excellent behaviour. Pupils have a high regard for both their classmates and for the adults who work with them. They display an enviable generosity of spirit, support a range of national and global charities and are always concerned to take care of the environment. Pupils feel extremely safe in the school due to secure safeguarding procedures and consistent and effective behaviour management.

Lessons are typified by enthusiasm, enjoyment, engagement and fun. Consequently, pupils are very well motivated, come to school ready to learn and are eager to contribute to lessons. Teachers mark books and set targets for improvement carefully and regularly. This, together with the recently introduced 'next steps' marking policy, ensures that the advice teachers give to pupils as to how to improve their work is very effective and most pupils are clear as to how to move forward in their learning. In a minority of lessons learning is held back because teachers do not always ensure that pupils are given sufficient time to work independently and to talk about their findings. Tasks set in these lessons do not provide maximum challenge for all pupils, particularly the more able.

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One reason for the school's success is the drive and ambition of the headteacher, which is shared by all staff and governors. There is a corporate desire to provide the best for all pupils and a commitment to continue moving the school forward, building on its many strengths. There is a strong sense of teamwork and pride in what has already been achieved, coupled with a total absence of complacency. School self-evaluation is highly accurate. As a result, the school knows exactly what to do further to sustain its journey of excellence and this, together with the successful action leaders have taken to ensure improvement since the last inspection, means the capacity to improve further is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on current good practice to further increase the proportion of outstanding lessons in all year groups by:
 - giving pupils more responsibility for their own learning by encouraging them to be more active and inquisitive in class
 - ensuring that teachers consistently challenge and extend the learning of pupils of all abilities, particularly the more able.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Pupils greatly enjoy school, grow in confidence and develop very positive attitudes to learning, and the work seen by inspectors in lessons confirms the overall picture of good and improving progress. Progress is accelerating rapidly in English and is outstanding. Pupils achieve well overall because most teachers expect much of their pupils and explain complicated ideas well. In an outstanding literacy lesson in Year 3, pupils learned at an exceptional pace because of the imaginative and challenging task set, developing deep insights into the use of language through the use of role play to explore dialogue.

There is very little difference in the progress made by the various groups of pupils, because the school is very conscious of their individual needs. For example, the work is made interesting for boys and the school works very effectively to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and to challenge fully those who enter the school with particularly high levels of attainment.

Pupils enthusiastically and knowledgeably explain the value of adopting healthy lifestyles and the need for exercise. Their very well-developed understanding of right and wrong, and appreciation and enjoyment of the wonders of life around them, reflects the school's Christian ethos. Pupils have an excellent understanding for their age of how to be safe in the community. They eagerly take advantage of the many opportunities to participate in the community and are very well informed about other people's needs, particularly due to the school's strong links with schools in different environments to their own. Pupils relish responsibility and this is shown through the mature attitude of the school council, the use of playground buddies and their eager

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participation in imaginative and thought provoking acts of worship in school and in the parish church. Pupils develop impressive social and interpersonal skills and relish working collaboratively. This, together with secure and improving standards in the key skills in English and mathematics, means that they are well prepared for the next stages of their lives.

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	3
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	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The carefully planned curriculum contributes strongly to pupils' learning because their interests are very well met. The curriculum strongly supports pupils' personal development through very effective personal, social and health education, and there is an excellent focus on using visits to widen pupils' life experiences. One pupil spoke for many when saying '...it is like one big family here.' In particular, religious education, the arts and music are very well promoted. The school plans carefully to ensure strong links between subjects and also ensures that planning for different abilities is increasingly sharp. Parents agree that children are looked after very well. Induction programmes are outstanding for those who arrive throughout the year and those starting in the Reception class. Child protection procedures are rigorous and the care for vulnerable pupils is outstanding. Excellent links with specialists help pupils with their learning, social skills and emotional development. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is especially strong and helps them to make similar progress to their peers.

Typically, lessons are fast-paced and fun. Teaching is lively, tasks and concepts are

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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clearly explained, and activities are carefully designed to challenge the pupils to learn at a swift pace. Adults ask perceptive questions and these help pupils to think and use more varied vocabulary in their answers. Effective use of 'talking partners', drama, role play and letter and sounds (phonics) activities help pupils make rapid progress in their speaking and writing. Teaching falls short of outstanding where opportunities are missed to challenge pupils through active learning that is matched carefully to their abilities. In these lessons teachers sometimes talk too much, which limits the time that pupils are actively and independently learning. This results in slower progress and less time for pupils to articulate what they have learnt. The school has set up thorough systems to check on pupils' progress and these are used well to ensure that none are in danger of falling behind and to enable teachers to consistently set the next steps for each pupil's learning. Pupils are growing in confidence as to how to improve their work.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Strong and clear sighted leadership and management are at the heart of the school's success. The highly effective headteacher works tenaciously to improve pupils' educational opportunities. She communicates her high expectations convincingly to staff so that all have a shared sense of direction and feel part of a successful team. Leaders check the school's performance rigorously, offer constructive advice and training and use their highly effective teachers very well to extend and share good practice. In this way, the quality of teaching and learning is constantly improving. Teamwork is strong, staff morale is high and pupils' progress is accelerating. Consequently a climate has been created where everyone is trying hard to make the school even better. Members of the senior leadership team and the subject leaders fulfil their responsibilities very well and there is a determination from staff at all levels to sustain and build upon the many gains of recent years. The school promotes complete equality for all pupils through its sophisticated monitoring and exemplary support.

The governing body fulfils all legal requirements and gives good attention to the welfare of pupils and staff with all safeguarding arrangements found to be effective at the time of the inspection. It holds the school to account well for its work but has yet to develop robust systems for evaluating the effectiveness of its work. A particular strength of school leaders is the exemplary way in which they have involved members of the diverse local community groups as well as national and

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international visits and visitors to ensure that pupils are developing into caring citizens who respect and value the views of others. As a result, a set of common, shared values is embedded in every child and so community cohesion is outstanding.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good provision for the Reception classes enables children to achieve well and develop a good level of independence. Children love coming to school and parents and carers are very appreciative of the good start that their children receive in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff have created a safe, attractive environment in which the needs of all children are well met. Teaching is good and so children make good progress from their differing starting points. This is because a team of well-qualified adults support the children skilfully by asking focused questions to develop their understanding. There is a good balance of activities led by adults and those from which children can choose. Children are developing excellent social skills because they are making choices and fostering independence through working with others.

All adults make observations of children and carefully assess their learning. However, this information is not always used rigorously enough to ensure that next steps in learning are sharply focused. By the end of their Reception Year most children are working securely towards the standards expected for their age in most areas. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader provides good leadership to her team. She has a very secure understanding of the Early Years curriculum and constantly reviews her practice to ensure that all children receive high quality care and support.

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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 school and its headteacher clearly enjoy the confidence and support of those parents who returned the questionnaire. Far more questionnaires were returned than is typical of a school of this size. A large number of individual comments reflected the very good quality of care, support and guidance given to pupils, particularly to those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the strong personal development reached by pupils. The inspectors agree with these views. A very small minority of parents raised concerns regarding instances of slow progress of some pupils. Inspectors found progress to be improving rapidly, is at least good and is often outstanding. The small number of constructive parental concerns were shared and discussed with the headteacher.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's CofE 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 122 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 207 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	67	55	54	44	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	70	57	52	43	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	48	39	67	55	7	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	37	65	53	11	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	53	43	66	54	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	44	59	48	7	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	51	42	69	57	2	2	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)	43	35	68	56	5	4	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	47	39	60	49	11	9	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	52	43	62	51	4	3	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	35	70	57	5	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	61	50	57	47	2	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	65	53	53	43	2	2	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



26 March 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary School, Barnet EN4 8SR

Thank you all for the warm welcome you gave to us when we visited your school recently. What a lovely two days we had. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you. St Mary's CofE Primary School is an outstanding school and you are right to be proud of it. Here are some of the really good things we found out about it.

- You behave impeccably around the school and in your classes and you look after each other so well.
- You relish working in groups and helping each other to learn and you readily help your classmates when they find things difficult.
- You make good progress as you move through the school and your achievement is getting better all the time. This is because your teachers teach you well and you also work very hard.
- Your teachers and teaching assistants take excellent care of you. You told us they make sure that everyone feels safe and secure. They also give you a lot of advice about how you can improve your work.
- Your headteacher and all your other teachers know exactly how to make sure that your school continues to be outstanding

Even in outstanding schools, there are ways of improving.

- To help you to do even better, we have asked your school to make sure that you are able to learn more things on your own and the work that is planned for you is not too easy or too hard, but always just at the right level of challenge

You must continue to work hard and keep helping your teachers to make sure that St Mary's CofE Primary continues to be an outstanding school in which to learn. I send you my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely
Michael Merchant
Lead inspector

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