

St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102909
Local Authority	Richmond Upon Thames
Inspection number	308160
Inspection dates	27–28 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Anna Brown
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Frostick
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2001
School address	Worple Street London SW14 8HE
Telephone number	020 8876 6679
Fax number	020 8392 1829

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	27–28 March 2008
Inspection number	308160

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and just over a quarter are from other White backgrounds. Almost a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than usually found. The percentage of pupils identified with learning difficulties is lower than average, although more pupils than in most schools have a statement of educational need. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times is also higher than that usually found. The school has gained Healthy Schools status, and has the Active Mark and Investors in People awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Mary Magdalen Primary is a good school and parents are overwhelmingly supportive of its work. One wrote, 'It's a lovely school, humane, warm and wise. It concentrates on each child achieving happiness through self respect and respect for others.' This emphasises the school's focus on including every child in all aspects of school life. The exemplary care, guidance and support provided by the school make an excellent impact on the pupils' personal development, which is outstanding. Pupils are polite, courteous and considerate of the views of others. They know their rights but also fulfil their responsibilities.

Pupils reach significantly above average standards and make good progress during their time at St Mary Magdalen's. Pupils, especially boys, do particularly well in writing, and make better than expected progress because leadership of English is strong. Fine tuned provision ensures that boys are effectively motivated and make rapid improvement. Progress is not as good in mathematics, particularly for the more able pupils, and standards are not as high. The school has already identified that this is the case and plans are already being put into place to remedy this. For example, the headteacher's approach to teaching a small Year 6 higher achieving mathematics group is excellent and is already paying real dividends.

Pupils use their writing skills effectively across the curriculum. They write confidently in history and in science, for example. Visitors to the school have also ensured that pupils are able to write well through their experiences in drama. This cross-curricular style of working is an effective component of the good curriculum, a particular strength of which is art. The school displays an excellent variety of high quality work by pupils, including collage and printing. Much evidence of this can be seen on the school's comprehensive website, which is very informative. It provides much vital information for parents including a copy of the latest newsletter.

Teaching is good because teachers' planning is detailed and gives thought to ensuring that there is a wide variety of activities for pupils to participate in. Teachers make good use of electronic whiteboards, and pupils comment on how much they enjoy this. They also comment that they do not use computers as much as they would like. Again, the school knows this to be the case and is endeavouring to rectify the situation. Assessment is good because teachers know their pupils well and prepare work to suit their needs. However, sometimes the more able pupils are not always challenged effectively, particularly in mathematics. Marking and academic guidance are exemplary. Pupils know clearly what they need to do to achieve the next level of attainment.

Good leadership and management are pro-active in seeking out ways to make improvements and raise standards. The leaders know their school well. However, although subject leaders are involved in some monitoring activities, they are not accountable for gauging the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility. The governors do a good job and hold the school to account well for its performance. The school communicates with parents well. There has been good improvement since the time of the last inspection. Writing has become a real strength. In light of these factors, the school is judged to have good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

On entry to Reception, pupils have the expected skills for their age, although a wide gap exists between the weakest and strongest children. Children settle well, and make good progress. This is because the teacher and teaching assistant work well together in planning purposeful lessons and providing activities that develop children both personally and as learners. They acquire thoughtful listening skills, speak with growing assurance and work co-operatively. Children develop their skills in writing, reading and counting, and their understanding of the world about them. For example, in a lesson on the use of signs, they understood the importance of direction arrows and making instructions large enough to read. They then used their signs to follow a route in the outdoor play area to find hidden dinosaur models. Their progress is assessed carefully so that activities match their particular learning needs. Effective links with parents and outside agencies make sure no concerns are overlooked. The Foundation Stage is good because gaps in children's learning are identified from regular monitoring.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics, particularly amongst more able pupils, to match those attained in English and science
- Ensure that middle managers take more of a lead in the monitoring of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall, pupils make good progress in response to good teaching and an effective curriculum. The school's tracking information and other data show some unevenness in progress across the key stages. This is because of a legacy of inaccurate teacher assessment at the end of Year 2 in previous years. Current assessment information for this year group shows that they are on track to meet their challenging targets, and that they achieve well. Boy's writing has been a focus and improvements made are a credit to the school. All boys met or exceeded national targets.

Results in national tests at the end of Year 2 and 6 show that pupils reach significantly above average standards overall. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 in mathematics at the end of Year 2 is significantly above average. However, this level of attainment is not sustained in Key Stage 2 and more able pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The school has identified the need to raise standards in mathematics and strategies in place are beginning to have an impact.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' smiling faces and excellent behaviour demonstrate their thorough enjoyment of school. Attendance is above average and reflects the very positive atmosphere within the school and the pupils' eagerness to learn. They say that they learn 'in a fun way'. They praise the clubs that the school offers them and speak enthusiastically about all the different competitions in which they have been involved. They have an excellent knowledge of, and choose to adopt healthy lifestyles. They have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils read the healthy school's notice board, which displays useful information for them. If pupils

are concerned about anything, there are worry boxes provided and one pupil said that 'these help and make us feel better.' Pupils enjoy taking on extra responsibilities in their classrooms and whole school community. The school council is very effective and has brought about change. For example, pupils contributed to the plans for the new playground. Some pupils participate in the Richmond Pupil Parliament. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have regular opportunity to reflect in assemblies and to celebrate cultural diversity such as in Black History Month. They also hold international breakfast days. Their response to fundraising for those less fortunate is outstanding, and enterprising ideas such as an 'x-factor' talent assembly contribute well to this. They develop academic and personal skills that prepare them well for the next stages in their education and future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in learning because they enjoy lessons and the activities provided beyond the taught curriculum. Most teachers use their subject knowledge well to harness pupils' interest by linking the topic to the real world. In a mathematics lesson for Year 2 on three-dimensional shapes, the teacher asked how knowledge of this might help with jobs when they were older. A pupil promptly and perceptively replied, that to be a builder you would have to understand the different shapes and sizes of bricks and how they fit together. Teachers organise lessons well because they use a common format with which pupils are familiar. They know from the start what they are expected to learn. At the end of lessons they assess their own learning alongside the teacher. Work is regularly marked using a scheme of two stars and a wish to identify two areas of progress and an area where there is a wish to improve. Pupils know their target levels, and what they should do to reach the next level, especially in the higher years. Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties benefit from the co-operative planning between teachers, teaching assistants and the inclusion co-ordinator. They use appropriate tasks to engage these pupils so that they progress as well as their classmates. However, more able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school reviews its curriculum regularly to check that it meets the needs of its pupils. Through staff discussion, the curriculum plan is adjusted to improve the timing of when topics are taught. It also ensures that required knowledge and skills are covered comprehensively across subjects. Teachers draw upon pupils' learning in one subject to develop their understanding in another. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson on writing in a persuasive style, pupils used their studies of Victorian child labour, to argue for and against this practice. Pupils enjoy the subjects they are taught, and make good progress. Through curriculum initiatives, the school addresses particular weaknesses in achievement. For example, boys' writing improved significantly, partly as a result of drama work with an actor-in-residence. Pupils learn to conduct themselves safely through activities in science, physical education and personal, social and health education. Good provision is made for their health and fitness through a variety of sports, including a number of competitive matches with other schools, and two terms of swimming. Provision for developing pupils' skills and use of information and communication technology has recently been hampered by equipment and maintenance issues, and these are being addressed. The curriculum is enriched by a great many sporting, cultural, and creative activities that are popular

with pupils and well attended. For example, in addition to French lessons, the school offers Spanish and Mandarin in lunchtimes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding levels of care and support enable pupils to feel safe and well looked after. Procedures for safeguarding children and ensuring that adults working in school are thoroughly checked meet requirements. Support for pupils' widely differing needs is outstanding. As one parent states, 'We particularly appreciate the kind and caring environment of the school community...' Academic guidance is particularly effective. The simple, but highly effective tracking system ensures that the individual needs of pupils are identified early and that strategies are put in place to support learning. Marking ensures that pupils are able to improve their work and the setting of targets is well established. Pupils know their targets in literacy very well but this is less successful in mathematics. Vulnerable learners are supported extremely well through close involvement with relevant external agencies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The talented headteacher ensures that there is a keen focus on raising standards. She provides clear direction for further improvement, making productive use of advice and analyses from the local authority and diocese. Senior leaders monitor standards and progress effectively, and identify strategies to raise achievement in key subjects. They set challenging targets. Strong emphasis is placed on the achievement of all pupils. The team monitors lessons well, and uses evidence to promote the professional development of staff. Subject leaders contribute well to raising achievement across the curriculum through the monitoring of progress towards targets and lesson planning. However, they do not monitor the quality of teaching in their areas. The governing body is proactive and understands its role thoroughly. Through a committee structure, it scrutinises all aspects of the school's work, such as pupils' performance and the curriculum. It also asks challenging questions of school leaders as and when the need arises.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

09 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School, London, SW14 8HE

What a lovely two days we had when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed ourselves. You made us very welcome with your pleasant smiles, excellent manners and fantastic behaviour. You really are a credit to your school. Thank you to those children who took the time to talk to us, it helped us to know what to put in the report. You told us how much you enjoy school because you like all your subjects. You said that the teachers teach you well and we agree with you. You talked about how well you do in competitions against other schools. This is highly commendable. Well done! We saw lots of high quality art work and writing displayed in your classrooms and corridors. The boys, in particular, have made a great improvement in their writing. This is excellent.

We agree with the vast majority of your parents and carers, and think that St Mary Magdalen is a good school. Your headteacher does a very good job and cares about each and every one of you. Your teachers prepare interesting lessons for you. You have a wide variety of clubs you can attend. You do very well in English and science.

Even in a good school like yours, there is always something to do to become even better. We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to ensure that you do just as well in mathematics as you do in English and science. We have asked them to make sure that all of you receive work which makes you think really hard so that you make as much progress as possible. Also, those teachers who are in charge of subjects should have the chance to check on what is happening in lessons in those subjects.

I look forward to seeing how well you all do in the future.

Kind regards

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Lead Inspector