

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48

URN118763

**St Mary's Catholic Primary School
St Richard's Road
Deal
Kent
CT14 9LF**

**Chair of Governors Mr Malcolm Parfitt
Headteacher Mrs Annie Keane
Inspectors Mrs Bernadette Dowsell
Mr Gary Tanner**

Inspection dates 23 May 2008

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
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Introduction

Description of the school

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is voluntary aided and is situated in the Dover Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Kent LA. The principal parishes, which the school serves are St John the Evangelist, Mongeham, and St Thomas of Canterbury, Deal. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 40%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10% in Key Stage 1 and 2.

The school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 187. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is slightly below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Around 28% of the pupils receive extra support in class. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

St Mary's is a good school, which is effective in demonstrating its Catholic ethos. It is committed to the welfare, happiness and education of the pupils, who are confident, polite and eager to learn. One parent summed it up by saying, "I feel the school provides a loving and caring environment for the children". The school has a distinct Catholic identity and the mission statement is embedded in all aspects of school life. The headteacher has developed a strong cohesive team of staff who are very supportive of each other. Relationships throughout the school are very good and high priority is placed on promoting the self esteem of everyone and, as a result, pupils feel valued, respected and well supported. The school has worked hard to introduce new initiatives for assessment. Governors are supportive and have recently devised new structures to enable them to develop their role as "critical friends". Most of the issues from the previous inspection have been resolved but some need further development, namely consistency in teachers' planning and marking and the provision of further resources. Procedures for self evaluation are in place and the school recognises the need for these to be more rigorous, in order to have a greater impact on raising standards. The commitment of governors and all staff ensure the school has a good capacity to improve.

Grade 2

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Monitor all aspects of religious education, planning, pupils' books and lessons more rigorously, to ensure the process improves the quality of teaching and learning.

Ensure that the increasing amount of assessment data available is used to track pupil progress and has an impact on raising standards.

Continue to improve the provision of resources, including those for the teaching of other faiths.

The Catholic life of the school

Leadership and management

The leadership of the headteacher, has helped to 'create a happy, working environment with co-operation, consideration and forgiveness at the heart of the school'. The headteacher has a clear vision of Catholic education and what it means for the whole community of St Mary's. This vision has been successfully shared with staff and governors. The relatively new senior leadership team is working well and an excellent spirit of teamwork is clearly evident. The mission statement is reviewed annually with staff and children and is displayed throughout the school.

Pupils are fully aware of the statement, for example some of their comments were, 'it makes us feel loved and happy', 'we want to follow Jesus,' and 'the teachers never give up on us'. Pupils are very well cared for and feel safe and secure. Their voice is heard through the school council, who have been proactive in many areas, including a friendship stop and the purchase of play equipment for lunch time. They are particularly proud that their request for a play leader was listened to and they spoke warmly of the difference he has made to the quality of their lunch time play. Governors are supportive of the School and aware of its strengths and areas for development. The governing body has recently introduced a new system of 'subject group strategy', which gives two governors the special responsibility for religious education and the spiritual life of the school. This will enable the governors to have a greater link with the subject leader and exercise more challenge. Partnership with parents is good and the overwhelming majority are very supportive and appreciative of what the school provides. One parent wrote, "St Mary's is a wonderful, caring school, always illustrating to the children the benefits of giving and not taking". Over recent years the school has worked extremely hard at developing closer links with the local parishes. There are school notice boards in the churches, which give school information and sometimes display work. School Masses now take place in St John's and this enables pupils to be more aware of the parish community. Advent and Lenten school liturgies take place in the church and parishioners are invited and welcomed. The school takes Key Stage 2 pupils by coach to St Thomas' church to perform their carol concert. At the present time the parish does not have a permanent parish priest but the deacon is a regular visitor to the school and is well known by the pupils. The priest, who is at present looking after the parish, is very supportive of the school. The headteacher speaks at churches on Education Sunday and supports the First Holy Communion programme at St John's as a catechist.

Grade 2

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

The school recognises that for many pupils, school is the only experience of Church, so teachers encourage the development of a personal relationship with God. The school aims to give pupils rich and meaningful experiences of liturgy and worship. There is a good programme for collective worship, which is linked to the 'Here I Am' programme and the liturgical year. Pupils are encouraged to become involved and their many talents are celebrated through music, dance and drama. Special liturgies take place during Advent and Lent and Christmas. Parents are welcome to assemblies, liturgies and Masses and they attend in large numbers as was seen during the special liturgy for Our Lady in the school hall. During this liturgy Year 6 pupils were fully involved, with the girls taking part in a simple procession and crowning of the statue of Our Lady and the boys leading the prayers. A decade of the rosary was said and pupils sang joyfully and enthusiastically. The younger pupils sang their own special hymn with actions. Prayer is central to the life of the school and there are opportunities for pupils to pray throughout the day. Pupils know many of the traditional prayers of the Church and are encouraged to write their own prayers.

Many examples of pupils' own prayers were seen and used. Pupils in Year 6 are now planning and writing their own simple liturgies and this is to be commended. Each class has a focal area for prayer, which varies in quality. These areas need to be more clearly linked to the 'Here I Am' theme or the liturgical year and be more integral to the prayer life of the class.

Grade 2

Community Cohesion

St Mary's is an inclusive school, which welcomes all. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds but all are welcomed and valued and helped to develop to their full potential. The school is involved with the local community through taking part in such events as 'carols on the bandstand', singing at a residential care home and performing dance at a centre for the retired. Involvement in these events helps pupils to be aware of their community and their responsibility within it. They have also taken part in issues such as 'ban the bag' where they made designs for bags and campaigned for less use of plastic bags. The school council is involved in a Kent Council Consortium, whereby all local school councils meet together to discuss and report on initiatives they have taken in their schools. Recently two members of each council visited Parliament, thus helping pupils to develop an awareness of the political process. Pupils contribute to a variety of charities, both local and global, these included CAFOD, Catholic Children's Society, Macmillan Nurses and Send a Cow to Africa. The school has excellent links with a school in Nigeria through a priest who visits each year and brings photos of the children that are being helped by the pupils fund raising. Pupils also helped provide stationary for a school in the Gambia at Christmas. Through these initiatives and projects pupils are actively developing their understanding of other communities and their responsibility to those less fortunate than themselves. There are good links with Secondary schools and the school is part of a transition project, which supports vulnerable Year 6 pupils in their preparation for transfer to secondary education.

Grade 2

Religious education

Achievement and standards

Attainment of pupils on entry to the school is slightly below average. Many pupils do not have a faith background, and so have little experience of Church. Pupils settle quickly in the Reception Class and become happy and confident to learn and they make good progress. Standards reached by most pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 are average but progress is variable. Throughout Key Stage 2 standards and progress are inconsistent. By the end of the key stage most pupils achieve standards that match national expectations.

Pupils with learning difficulties are very well supported by able teaching assistants but some of the more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Pupils have a positive attitude to their religious education. They work collaboratively, behave well and clearly enjoy their lessons. Their lessons clearly have an impact on how they live their lives and they are caring and supportive of one another. Work in pupils books show an inconsistency between classes in quality and quantity and presentation in some classes is poor.

Grade 3

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

There are positive relationships in all classes and teachers have very good classroom management skills. Lessons build on prior attainment, for example in a lesson on friendship, pupils in the reception class were able to recall the story of the feeding of the five thousand and knew that Jesus' friends were called disciples. The quality of teaching is variable throughout the school. Where teaching is good, pace meets the needs of learners and tasks are varied, challenging and interesting. In others the pace is too slow and does not engage all pupils or meet their needs, particularly those who are more able. Lessons have clear learning intentions and many teachers plan an interesting range of activities to enhance pupils' learning. In Year 6 pupils worked in groups of three using hot seating and in Year 2 adults modelled the three steps needed to forgive someone. Pupils are learning to develop their empathetic skills and good examples were seen of this. Prayer is an integral part of lessons and in a Year 4 class pupils used prayers that they had written themselves. Some good examples of cross curricular links were seen and many opportunities to develop pupils' moral education. Assessment is developing well and the school has worked hard in this area. Pupils' work is assessed using the new attainment targets and careful records kept. Consideration should be given to developing a portfolio of levelled pupils work, in order to ensure consistency in standards. A good start has been made with tracking individual pupils' progress. Once these assessment procedures are fully embedded they should have an impact on raising pupil achievement. All work in pupils' books is marked but much of this is in the form of ticks or comments such as 'good' or 'well done'. There is some evidence of interactive marking where teachers extend pupils' thinking and learning by asking appropriate questions. This good practice needs to be shared and developed in all classes. Excellent support is provided by teaching assistants, both to individual pupils and small groups with learning difficulties. Their sensitive support enables these pupils to make a full contribution to lessons.

Grade 3

The religious education curriculum

The school fully meets the requirements of the 10% of the weekly curriculum. All teachers plan their work using the diocesan planning sheets and these are amended and adapted as appropriate. However the planning of differentiated activities is not always evident. The school is using the SEAL materials as part of the personal, health and social education programme. The sex education policy needs to be reviewed with reference to the Diocesan Policy. The teaching of other faiths is rather haphazard and little evidence was seen of this work. The school needs to ensure that all staff are teaching this aspect of the curriculum in line with the guidelines in 'Here I Am'. The school has built up resources over recent years and has recently invested in 'God's Story' and 'Church's Story'. Further resources are needed however and particularly some artefacts for the teaching of other faiths.

Grade 3

Leadership and management

The headteacher, governors and staff have a common vision of Catholic education. The Co-ordinator, who is new to her role, is ably supported by the headteacher and together they ensure that the Catholic life of the school and religious education have a high profile. The Co-ordinator is committed to her new role and has attended diocesan training. She has a good understanding of the strengths of religious education in the school and key areas for development, which are needed to improve standards. The headteacher has supported the Co-ordinator in her monitoring role and together they have monitored planning and observed lessons. Scrutiny of pupils' books has been undertaken as a whole staff exercise. As the co-ordinator takes responsibility for monitoring the subject, she must ensure that it is undertaken in a rigorous manner and clear and specific feedback given to staff, in order to improve standards. The religious education policy, although recently reviewed needs to include sections on spiritual and moral development and a clearer section on assessment. All staff work hard to create a pleasant and stimulating environment, which reflects the school's Catholic distinctiveness. Displays such as those in the hall on Our Lady and paintings and drawings on the coming of the Holy Spirit in the corridor, celebrate pupils' work and reflect the spiritual life of the school.

Grade 2