

St Martha's Catholic Primary School, Kings Lynn

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121139
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	363933
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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 of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kim MacLachlan
Headteacher	Aidan McGovern
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 19 lessons, observing eight teachers. They held meetings with staff, groups of pupils, and members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body. Informal discussions were held with parents and carers as they arrived with their children at the start of the day. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised assessment information, pupils' books, records of pupils' progress and school improvement plans. Inspectors analysed 87 parents' and carers' questionnaires, 105 responses to the pupil survey and eight responses to the staff questionnaire.

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

- How well does the feedback pupils receive, including through marking, help them understand how to improve their work and involve them in their learning?
- How effectively does teaching meet the needs of different group of pupils?
- Does the school's development of the curriculum make learning more interesting for the pupils while still focusing on promoting their basic skills?
- How effectively does the school support its more vulnerable pupils?

Information about the school

Pupil numbers have risen in this average-sized school. Nearly half of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with an increasing number from Indian heritages. A quarter of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Few pupils are identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities, although the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. Their needs are mostly associated with learning difficulties related to literacy. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. The school has recently gained the International School award and is a registered member of the 2012 Olympic Get Set network.

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

St Martha's Primary is a good school. It has improved in key areas since its last inspection and has developed some outstanding features under the headteacher's skilled leadership. The pupils develop strong values and learn to take responsibility for their actions. Their great enjoyment of school is reflected in above average attendance levels and the sense of purpose and harmony at all times.

Children have a good start to their school life in the much-improved Reception class. It now provides a well-resourced learning environment in which children make good progress in all aspects of their development. This good progress continues across the rest of the school, although it is more rapid in Years 5 and 6. Within a pattern of good teaching, some lessons have outstanding features that drive learning forward rapidly through a wide variety of activities that are matched carefully to the pupils' identified needs. However, whole-class teaching tends to be pitched at the middle ability and questioning is not always used effectively to challenge the pupils' thinking. Attainment is above average by the end of Year 6, but higher in English than in mathematics. This is because not all teaching of key mathematical skills and concepts is secure.

Pupils are known well as individuals and their progress is carefully checked through rigorous assessment and tracking procedures. This enables the school to target action and resources to tackle potential underachievement. Pupils understand their individual targets and try to incorporate them in their work, particularly when writing. Marking is thorough, but does not always provide pupils with guidance on the steps needed to meet their targets or give them responsibility for improving their work.

There have been considerable improvements to a curriculum in which sport and music are major highlights. Topic themes link learning and make lessons more interesting and relevant, although opportunities are missed for pupils to take a greater lead in topic design by identifying their own lines of enquiry. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay fit and healthy, demonstrating this through their keen participation in the wide range of physical activities and the school's success in sporting competitions. The Olympic award is in recognition not just of the school's promotion of sport but also the values of friendship, respect and determination among others.

The pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in the great consideration they show to each other. They are keen to learn about

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different ways of life and show much respect for the customs and values of others. They take great enjoyment from their participation in the choir and drama activities such as the Year 6 performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Pupils feel safe in school, a view supported by parents and carers. Pupils behave well and are polite and considerate towards others. They make a positive contribution to school life and show concern for improving the environment through the work of their Eco Council.

Good leadership and management are keeping the school focused on driving forward further improvement. The headteacher is supported well by a committed staff team and a supportive yet challenging governing body. Action to overcome weaknesses has led to improved teaching and learning and teachers are keen to improve their practice. Thorough monitoring and accurate self-evaluation provide a firm basis from which leaders plan for the future. These features provide the school with good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate learning, particularly in mathematics by:
 - extending the teachers' skills in teaching key concepts
 - challenging pupils to think more deeply through more focused questions.
- Encourage pupils to take more responsibility for their learning by:
 - involving them in the design of topics
 - providing more effective guidance through the marking of their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

When learning is most effective, pupils are attentive, show interest in what they are doing and work at a good pace. They take pride in their work, respond well to their teachers and constructively assess each other's work when given the opportunity. They develop their writing in a wide range of contexts and apply their information and communication technology skills to research and support learning in a wide range of subjects. Learning occasionally slows because there is some loss of concentration when teachers do not encourage pupils to take an active role in their learning.

There is no significant variation in the achievement of pupils from different ethnic groups. This includes those of Indian heritages. Year 6 test results fell in 2010, but were still above average. Indications are that they are higher this year in English but at roughly the same level in mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and the specific needs of pupils with a statement of special educational needs are met well. The team of support staff is carefully deployed to maximise its impact on their learning, both in lessons and in small group sessions outside the classroom. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also make good progress by being immersed in an environment rich in language from an early age.

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Prayer and reflection are integral to pupils' life in school and they vividly remember the pilgrimage to Walsingham. Pupils play a significant role in the school and faith community and show their concern for others through the funds they raise for various charities. They greatly enjoy taking part in cultural and sporting activities. Older pupils are keen to act as 'buddies' to younger ones, helping to enhance the family atmosphere. While they help to resolve conflicts that arise, this has not been formalised through training. Pupils are very knowledgeable about the factors influencing their health and older pupils confidently talk about the dangers posed by drugs, alcohol and smoking. A programme of road safety across the school and cycling proficiency for Key Stage 2 pupils are examples of how the school helps pupils to be aware of what to do in any unsafe situations.

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	1

How effective is the provision?

Through the teachers' skilled management of behaviour, classrooms are calm and purposeful environments that promote well the pupils' learning. The most effective teaching seen grabbed the pupils' interest, for example through the use of drama in Year 6 English or when Year 5 pupils used a computer to help with their understanding of measuring angles. Pupils are keen to answer questions because their contributions are clearly valued by their teachers, although opportunities are missed to work with their 'talk partners' more often. In the few less effective lessons, teachers do not fully engage pupils' interest with the result that their concentration waivers and they become restless.

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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The much-improved curriculum is a major factor in the pupils' enjoyment of school and learning. The focus by teachers on developing basic skills is now enhanced by linking subjects through carefully planned topics and supports the development of writing and the use of information and communication technology. Off-site activities bring learning to life, such as the walk by Year 3 pupils to a local wood which acted as a stimulus to their study of the local area and development of map-reading skills. Many of the extra sporting and performing arts activities are made possible through the expertise of specialist coaches and close links with local secondary schools.

The school provides the pupils with a very welcoming and caring environment. They put great faith in staff to advise, guide and support them. Effective arrangements help pupils to settle into school at whatever stage they join and then move on confidently to secondary school. The school's work with families and a wide range of local health and support agencies aids the pupils' learning, well-being and development, particularly when facing potentially challenging circumstances. This includes additional expertise to help support pupils with autism, speech and language difficulties, and that provided by the local mental health team.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is ambitious for the pupils, not only for promoting their academic achievement but also for their personal development. This ambition is shared by the staff team, along with a commitment to break down any language or learning barriers pupils might face. Middle leaders are becoming more effective in fulfilling their roles, and are taking a stronger lead in monitoring performance. Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are at the core of the school's values. Targets for pupils are challenging and progress towards them carefully charted so that any underachievement can be spotted early and action taken. However, less rigour has been placed on evaluating the performance of different ethnic groups to identify if any gaps are emerging.

The well-led governing body challenges the school to do better and is closely involved in school evaluation and forward planning. The views of parents and carers about the school are sought and action taken where possible. The governing body also ensures that procedures for safeguarding the pupils are robust, and their impact is frequently monitored, reviewed and updated. A notable feature is the way safety

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issues are dealt with through the curriculum so that pupils can be aware of how to deal with potential risks.

The school makes a strong contribution to promoting greater community cohesion. It engages well with local groups, including an organisation which works to bring people of different communities closer together. The international dimension to the school's work is reflected in the pupils' participation in a project on global citizenship, and is recognised by the International Schools award. Parents and carers receive appropriate and increasing information about school events and their children's progress. The school has productive partnerships with other agencies to extend pupils' learning experiences. Specialist expertise and guidance are sought when needed to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Under skilled leadership the Reception class has become an interesting place for the children's learning, with activities smoothly linked between the inside and outdoor classrooms. As improvements to provision have become embedded, the children's progress has accelerated. Their skills are broadly as expected for their age when they join the school, but an increasing number speak English as an additional language.

Children are encouraged to become independent and develop good learning and social skills quickly. They behave well. They are keen to take responsibility for tidying away and happily help each other when working on activities. Routines are well established and children know about healthy food, drink regularly and wash their hands after visiting the toilet and before eating.

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Adults place a strong emphasis on involving children in planning topics and basing them on their interests, such as the current work on dinosaurs. Ongoing assessment of the children's development is used to plan activities that are carefully balanced between those led and directed by adults and those where the children take responsibility for developing their learning. Sessions where children learn the sounds letters make are taught well, but not always matched closely to each child's needs.

Each child's 'learning story' is a valuable record of their development. They provide useful information for parents and carers, and give a clear indication of the next steps in learning although these can be rather general at times. Through successful action this year, parents and carers now make a strong contribution at home to their child's learning and are kept up to date with events, including through e-mail.

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

A higher proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire than in most primary schools. The level of satisfaction is high in response to all of the questions, with very little disagreement. Inspection evidence endorses their very positive views about the school, and particularly that teaching is good, their children are helped to adopt a safe and healthy lifestyle and are making good progress. One parent neatly summed up the views of many when writing, 'The greatest qualities of the school are that it cares deeply about the children and consults parents at every possible opportunity when making decisions.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Martha's Catholic Primary School, Kings Lynn 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 87 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 208 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	68	78	19	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	75	86	12	14	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	64	74	22	25	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	61	70	25	29	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	64	74	23	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	60	69	26	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	63	30	34	0	0	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)	50	57	24	28	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	54	62	31	36	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	53	61	29	33	4	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	49	56	34	39	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	62	71	23	26	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	70	80	15	17	1	1	0	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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:	<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.



6 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Martha's Catholic Primary School, King's Lynn, PE30 4AY

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently, and for telling us your views. We know that you enjoy attending school and saw that you work hard. Inspectors were particularly impressed by your confident answers to their questions. These are the things we liked best.

- St Martha's Catholic Primary School is good and improving because the headteacher, staff and governing body do their utmost to help you all to succeed.
- You make good progress, particularly in English.
- Your positive attitudes to learning and above average attendance levels contribute significantly to your progress.
- The curriculum provides many enjoyable experiences for you, with sport and music being highlights of school life.
- The school works well in partnership with others to support your learning and has formed strong links with your parents and carers.
- Teaching is good and improving, even though marking is not yet used consistently to help you to understand what you need to do to improve.
- You develop an excellent understanding of how to keep yourselves fit and healthy.

We have asked the school to improve learning by ensuring that teachers use questions to make you think more deeply, particularly in mathematics, provide clearer guidance for you through their marking, and give you greater responsibility to decide what you want to learn in each topic. You can play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to work hard and improving your attendance even further. Well done for showing such pride in your school and in your achievements.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale
Lead inspector

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