

St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106349
Local Authority	Trafford
Inspection number	355938
Inspection dates	11–12 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

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	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr N Edgar
Headteacher	Mrs B Davies
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 14 lessons and each of the seven teachers was seen twice in their classrooms. They held meetings with pupils, parents and carers, staff, members of the governing body and the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work and looked at school improvement planning, internal and external progress monitoring documentation, pupils' workbooks and also child protection and safeguarding policies. Inspectors analysed 75 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 93 completed by pupils in Key Stage 2 and nine returned by staff.

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

- Whether the school has arrested the apparent decline in attainment and progress, suggested by data, in Key Stage 2.
- The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 to establish whether it comprises high expectations and challenge to enable pupils to attain as well as they can.
- Whether the curriculum meets the needs, interests and aspirations of all pupils.
- The sharpness of school self-evaluation and whether it leads to focused planning for improvement.
- The quality and impact of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage and whether outcomes for children have been maintained since the previous inspection.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average sized school. Most pupils are White British and there are few pupils at early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average but is increasing. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. An above average number of pupils join or leave the school other than at the usual times. There have been considerable changes to the teaching staff and governing body since the previous inspection, including the appointment of a new deputy headteacher, a new head of infants and also five new teaching staff. St Mary's is an accredited Healthy School, holds the Financial Management in Schools standard and is currently actively involved in the Global Children's Challenge as part of its work on promoting physical fitness. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Agency Primary Quality Mark 3.

The 'Let's Play' initiative operates on the school site. It receives a separate inspection and the report is available on the Ofsted website.

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. It is improving rapidly and provides outstanding care, guidance and support for its pupils. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are of the highest order. This is recognised as such by parents and carers with comments such as, 'The support and pastoral care for our children are exemplary', and, 'We would recommend this school to anyone!'

Children generally enter the Reception class with broadly average age-related skills. Over time, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have been variable but they improved markedly in 2010. Pupils now make good progress and achieve well across the school to reach above average attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. More-able pupils have not always reached the standards of which they are capable, particularly in writing, and opportunities for all pupils to reinforce their oral and listening skills are not fully embedded in all years.

Pupils show great pride in their school and they sing the St Mary's song in assembly with gusto. They have the highest regard for their teachers and teaching assistants and mirror the excellent support they receive by the outstanding contribution they make to both the school and wider communities. They willingly take on a wide range of responsibilities: as school councillors, librarians, members of the 'playground squad' and reading buddies, they are proactive in suggesting ideas as to how the school can improve and in supporting younger children. They know how to eat healthily and take part in a variety of sports and games to keep themselves fit.

Teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2, has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Staff are considering how they can share more effectively the good and outstanding practice across all years, in order that pupils can be encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning. The 'connected curriculum' is becoming a most positive feature of school provision and enrichment activities to meet the interests of all pupils are strong elements within it.

School self-evaluation is sharp and has become increasingly more accurate since the previous inspection. Staff of all levels of experience and responsibility, together with members of the governing body, are actively and regularly involved in gauging the performance of the school in all areas of its life. As a result, the school has improved well and demonstrates a good capacity to sustain this improvement. St Mary's is a school which places great emphasis on developing pupils both personally and academically and it provides good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve pupils' progress and attainment by:

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- sharing good and exemplary practice in relation to encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning
- refine assessment practice in order that teachers plan activities which meet the learning needs of pupils even more closely
- developing the curriculum to provide pupils with more opportunities to improve their skills in speaking and listening
- providing more-able pupils with an increasing number of activities which challenge them to reach the highest National Curriculum levels, particularly in writing.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils are enthusiastic learners and sometimes cannot wait to begin the activities, for example when they saw the 'burglary crime scene' in the library prior to examining the evidence and producing a report on what may have happened. They get on well with each other in lessons, enjoy the activities, and are delighted when their classmates succeed and reach their targets. Following somewhat of a decline in attainment in 2009, inspection evidence, including the 2010 results, demonstrate that the school is now back on track and that standards are above, and in some cases well above average by the end of Year 6. Progress across the school is therefore good and pupils of all groups are achieving well from their starting points. As a result of bespoke support from talented and committed teaching assistants, including higher-level teaching assistants, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their peers. In addition, pupils new to learning English are progressing well in their understanding and use of their new language: they even have the confidence to read their work aloud to their classmates. The school recognises that, although the proportion of pupils reaching National Curriculum Level 5 in writing has increased, activities to challenge more-able pupils to reach this level are not fully embedded across the school.

Pupils behave well and are a credit to their families and to the school. They feel safe and comment, 'The grown-ups are kind to us and are always there if we need them.' Their contribution to the school community and beyond is outstanding: the school council, reading buddies and the 'playground squad' look after younger children on a regular basis and pupils in all classes take their charity fund-raising very seriously indeed. Pupils talk accurately and confidently about how to lead a healthy lifestyle and those in Year 5 are proud to wear pedometers to gauge how far they walk as part of their involvement in the Global Children's Challenge to fight obesity. Attendance has been consistently above average for several years and pupils are punctual to school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and pupils have a keen understanding of cultures and religions which are different to their own. Their singing in assembly is a joy to hear and pupils are delighted that the staff join in the songs too!

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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	2
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	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?

The quality of teaching is good across the school and there are examples of outstanding practice in both key stages and increased levels of motivation and enjoyment in learning as a consequence. Teaching in Key Stage 2 has improved markedly since the previous inspection and, consequently, pupils now make good and sometimes outstanding progress across Years 3 to 6. Challenge in lessons has risen and teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. In the best lessons, a Year 5 mathematics session, for example, pupils' independence in learning is facilitated by extensive group work and also by the requirement that pupils find things out for themselves: as a result of creativity in calculation, pupils were able to gauge accurately the numbers of different kinds of beings on an alien planet far away from earth. In a minority of lessons, however, opportunities for personal research are not fully embedded and pupils do not always take enough responsibility for their own learning.

The extent and accuracy of assessment have improved also over the past two years and the monitoring of pupils' progress is now more regular and completed as a matter of routine. The school is now looking to refine its assessment further, by more use of e-assessment strategies, for example, in order that teachers' planning can be focused on the learning needs of pupils even more closely. Marking is good and pupils themselves speak highly of the extensive comments they receive on how they can improve their work.

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The 'connected curriculum' is developing apace and provides a good balance between the development of pupils' personal and life skills, their interest in learning for its own sake and also their academic progress. The school is aware that activities which foster the development of their speaking and listening skills are somewhat underdeveloped. There is a good variety of enrichment activities. The school quite rightly prides itself on its emphasis on learning for real-life situations. Pupils were delighted, for example that they were able to highlight traffic problems on Cornhill Road after their speed survey and they wrote to the House of Commons with their findings. There is a good range of enrichment activities including visitors and visits, and pupils enjoyed dressing up in Victorian costume when they entered the apprentice house at Quarry Bank Mill.

Pastoral care is outstanding and reflects the overriding concern to provide each individual with the tools to ensure they can take full part in everything the school has to offer. Moreover, the raising of pupils' self-esteem and confidence is an essential element of the ethos of the school. Pupils' emotional development and well-being are therefore central to all it tries to do. Pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified both rapidly and accurately and they benefit from excellent support which is focused on their individual needs. Furthermore, pupils who speak English as an additional language are making good progress in their studies too, as a result of the sensitive guidance they receive. Pupils are inducted very well into the next year and key stage and the strong links the school has with a range of local high schools ensure they are prepared most effectively for secondary education.

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?

As a result of much sharper systems to evaluate the performance of the school and well-founded action plans for improvement, teaching has improved, pupils' progress has begun to accelerate and standards are rising. The talented and perceptive headteacher leads by example and she is supported by a forward-thinking senior leadership team which emphasises the importance of teamwork in everything it does. As teaching and support staff say, 'We all work together here to make sure that the school keeps moving forward.' The relatively new governing body has developed a greater understanding of school performance since the previous inspection and members are actively involved in both formal and informal systems, including class and curriculum links, of school self-evaluation. They now challenge the leadership with rigour.

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Parents pay testament to the good partnership they have with both teaching and non-teaching staff and they value the information on the school website which gives them considerable information about how they can support their children with their learning. There are well-established links with a variety of external partners and gifted and talented pupils benefit from science projects delivered by a local high school. In addition, a specialist sports college complements the school's work in physical education.

Child protection and safeguarding practice is outstanding and fully meets requirements. It is based on comprehensive and regularly updated policies and also ongoing training for staff. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and the whole ethos of the school encourages pupils and staff to reject discrimination in all its forms. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily and the school's extensive audit of its context is leading to well-founded plans for improvement in this area. It recognises, for example, that links with schools which have a greater multicultural intake are underdeveloped.

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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills on entry to the Reception class vary from year to year, but are generally in line with expectations for their age, except in personal, social and emotional development where they are lower. Following a very effective induction into their new surroundings, they settle down quickly and are soon working and playing very well with their peers and engaging enthusiastically in all the activities. They continue to make outstanding progress in all areas of learning and show high levels of curiosity about the world around them, for example when they find, in their words, 'tiny creatures' and also dinosaurs in the sand pit.

Good direct teaching, strong support from teaching assistants and impressive use of resources, Pam the puppet, for example, motivate them to be creative in their learning in the colourful indoor area. The outdoor space provides for all areas of the curriculum but it

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is rather small and opportunities to promote pupils' physical development are a little limited on occasions. Nonetheless, children have many opportunities to select their own games and the vibrant and exciting atmosphere reflects the trust and confidence they have in the adults who work with them.

Leadership and management are outstanding and ensure that the welfare of each child is at the heart of everything the setting tries to do. Indeed, regular and high-quality monitoring leads to an accurate evaluation of performance and continuous emphasis on providing the very best for each individual. There are strong links with a variety of outside agencies for the benefit of the children, and parents and carers speak very positively of home–school communication and of what the setting provides for their children.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

All parents and carers who returned the questionnaires believe that their children enjoy school and most are entirely happy with their children's experience at St Mary's. Moreover, the vast majority are of the opinion that the school helps their children have a healthy lifestyle. Parents and carers who came to talk to inspectors added that they believed the school emphasises the development of the whole child and that they make good progress both personally and academically as a result. A small minority expressed concerns about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors agree that there is small number of pupils who do not always behave as well as they might but judge that behaviour management is effective and that pupils conduct themselves well in class and around school. A small minority, too, does not believe the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors found no evidence during the inspection to endorse this view and judge that the school's partnership with parents and carers is good.

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 75 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 179 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	56	33	44	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	61	28	37	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	21	28	47	63	7	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	32	41	55	7	9	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	30	40	40	53	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	48	28	37	8	11	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	47	38	51	2	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)	28	37	35	47	3	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	37	38	51	5	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	31	35	47	13	17	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	25	38	51	12	16	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	31	46	61	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	47	37	49	2	3	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. 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.



13 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary School, Manchester, M41 5TJ

Thank you all for your warm welcome when the inspection team visited your school recently. You were very polite and kind to us. We are particularly grateful to those of you who came to talk to us on Monday and Tuesday. We really enjoyed your singing in assembly and found the chocolate project display in the hall quite fascinating to read. I promised I would write you a letter to explain what we found during the inspection and here it is!

St Mary's is a good school which is improving very quickly indeed. You are so right to be proud of it. You are making good progress in your lessons and most of you really enjoy learning. All the grown-ups who work with you care for and look after you exceptionally well. You look after younger children very well too and you accept such a wide range of responsibilities to help run the school. Your behaviour is good and you are not afraid to give visitors advice on how to eat healthily and why it is important to keep fit. Your attendance has been good for a long time now and you always arrive at school punctually in the morning.

Your headteacher and all the other staff are very proud of you too and they are always looking for ways to make the school even better. I would like to help them with this so I have asked your teachers to give you more opportunities to work things out for yourselves and take more responsibility for your own learning. I have also asked them to check even more on how well you are doing so that they can plan work which really suits you and gives you more chances to practise your skills in speaking and listening. Finally, I have talked to them about challenging you even more in your writing, so that you can aim for the highest levels.

Thank you for your kindness. Please keep working hard and looking after each other.

Yours sincerely

Mr Jim Kidd

Lead inspector

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