

# St Mary's Community Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110955
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	378204
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 April 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Anna Dawson

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–5
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	102
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Nicola Jenkins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Ken Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 November 2008
<b>School address</b>	Old Wrexham Road Handbridge Chester CH4 7HS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01244 981222
<b>Fax number</b>	None
<b>Email address</b>	head@stmarysnursery.cheshire.sch.uk

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## Introduction

Inspection team

Anna Dawson

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector spent five hours observing 11 sessions and made three shorter observations of children's learning led by two teachers and seven early years' practitioners. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and a small number of parents and carers. Although there were no formal meetings with children, opportunities were taken to talk to the children and listen to them talking to staff during their sessions in school. Observations were made of the school's work, the children's learning journeys, photographic evidence and documentation relating to the children's attainment, the school's provision, leadership and safeguarding. The inspector analysed 44 questionnaires from parents and carers and others completed by the staff.

## Information about the school

This is an average sized nursery which offers part-time provision. The majority of children come from the surrounding areas. Nearly all are White British. Four per cent of children from a variety of backgrounds are learning English as an additional language. Three per cent of children are disabled and have special educational needs.

The nursery has moved premises since the last inspection in 2008 and shares a site with Overleigh Primary School. The primary school is inspected separately, and the report can be found 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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>1</b>

## Key Findings

- This is an outstanding school. The extremely skilled staff give excellent support and care to help children make rapid progress in their learning and development to achieve exceptionally well. The parents and carers without exception support and value the education and care their children receive. This is reflected in such comments as 'A truly wonderful school', 'An excellent nursery school, amazing!'
- From their starting points, children make rapid progress in all areas of learning and achieve exceptionally well to develop skills above those usually expected of this age. There is no difference in the attainments of boys and girls. Children learning English as an additional language, and those who are disabled and those that have special educational needs achieve equally as well as others.
- Behaviour is excellent. The children feel very safe and secure and have fun. Relationships between the staff and children are extremely good and the children enjoy learning immensely in an inclusive, lively, happy and very well-resourced environment.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. The staff work together as a cohesive team with high expectations to plan exciting and motivating activities. Children's communication, language and social skills are particularly well promoted from entry and any difficulties are quickly assessed and overcome with the help of specialist expertise. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- The school is exceptionally well led and managed by the headteacher, who maintains a clear direction and high standards. The leadership of teaching and the management of performance are extremely good. The very experienced staff team works together extremely well to ensure that children reach their full potential. However, the systems for recording children's progress are in

different forms and places and the data are not as easily accessible as they could be for analysis.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Refine the systems for recording the children's progress towards the early learning goals so that the data are more easily accessible for analysis.

## **Main Report**

### **Achievement of pupils**

Without exception, parents and carers believe that their children make at least good progress. The inspection evidence indicates that children's achievement is consistently outstanding. From their starting points, which are typically expected for this age, all children make rapid progress and achieve exceptionally well. On entry, children of varying attainments are assessed in detail by a speech and language therapist and the staff for their attainments in language, communication and social skills. Swift action is then taken to address individual needs. All staff are very well trained and experienced in helping children to achieve any targets set. Where appropriate, help is sought for those who are disabled and those who have special educational needs. Children learning English as an additional language are helped where necessary with the aid of bilingual resources. Their parents and carers work very well in partnership with the school, for instance, one parent has made an excellent bilingual picture dictionary to aid understanding. All groups of children achieve and enjoy learning equally well. For example, during the telling of the story of 'The Owl Babies', the questioning by the teacher prompted discussion about why owls see in the dark and feelings associated with feeling 'lost'. Children went on to role play the story, working well together to successfully sequence the events of the story. They increased their knowledge and understanding of 'nocturnal creatures' such as the hedgehog, bat, spiders, moths and owls as they discussed the features of the toy animals and insects they found in the 'dark place' with their torches. Initiatives such as 'The Language Project' and 'Maths Fun Club' are successful in ensuring that boys, who were attaining at a slightly lower level than the girls on entry, catch up by the time they leave. Essential learning skills, such as information and communication technology (ICT) and problem-solving are promoted very well. By the time children leave, their skills are above those usually expected of most other children nationally in all areas of learning, including in acquiring early reading skills and a knowledge of books.

### **Quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is outstanding and parents and carers agree. They praise the teaching highly with comments such as, 'excellent, inspirational and fabulous'. Parents and carers appreciate the hard work that goes into helping children make such good progress. One parent comments, for example, 'My child only started in January and we have been amazed by his progress, but he thinks he plays all day!' The staff are extremely skilled and dedicated in their goal to help each child fulfil their potential and in making learning fun. The nursery is characterised by constant

dialogue as children are supported and challenged to develop their thinking and learning. Children's contributions to discussions are valued highly and staff skilfully question and positively build on children's comments to guide their thinking and deepen their understanding. Plenty of time is given to children to organise their thoughts and to respond. During an enjoyable activity about shapes outdoors, for example, children were challenged to investigate and play with large two dimensional outlines of shapes. The teacher, through sensitive dialogue, constantly reinforced learning where it was insecure in different ways so that all children achieved the learning objective of identifying correctly the properties of triangles, squares, rectangles and circles. The children were congratulated on their successful learning and encouraged to review their progress, which built their self-esteem and confidence. Further activities and play with shapes in collage work, ICT and puzzles consolidated their understanding. The varied curriculum topics, such as 'Africa' where children go on a pretend 'safari' and participate in African dance, make a significant contribution to the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is outstanding.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Children's behaviour is excellent. The children have learned exceptionally well how to behave demonstrating very good manners. Their skills and development are above those usually expected of this age. Skills such as the consideration they show for others, for instance in helping each other to fasten their coats or helping the new starters where to find a painting apron, are above those usually seen at this age. The children respond exceptionally well to high staff expectations. For instance, 'good sitting' and 'good listening' are the norm during small group discussions. The children are independent in choosing their activities and devising their own investigations. They sensibly move around the nursery using resources carefully so as not to cause any accidents. When they have finished they tidy up efficiently.

Relationships between staff and children are excellent and characterised by mutual respect. There have never been any incidents of racism or bullying and any concerns are quickly resolved. Parents and carers have high praise for the excellent relationships between the staff and the children. They agree with the inspection judgement that their children are exceptionally well cared for and that relationships and behaviour are typically excellent. For instance, one parent states, 'my daughter, when asked who her friends are lists her teachers' names among her peers' names and that's lovely for a parent to hear'. The children express their opinions freely because they feel safe and secure. They say they feel happy and immensely enjoy their activities. Staff take great care of the children and staying safe outside school is frequently discussed. For example, following a story, children discussed road safety and the importance of staying close to parents and carers outside school. Attendance, although not statutory, is good for this age group. The vast majority of children attend either each morning or afternoon which sets up a good pattern for their next phase of education.

### **Leadership and management**

Exceptionally clear direction and the drive for continual improvement are set by the headteacher. All staff work very effectively as a dedicated and cohesive team. They

update their professional skills frequently by attending relevant conferences and visiting other settings, learning from their outstanding practice. Through the accurate monitoring of performance and frequent evaluation of progress towards the school objectives, the school has maintained high standards since the last inspection and is in a strong position to continue to improve further.

The very good governing body acts as a critical friend and it works successfully alongside the staff to achieve the school objectives. For example, the 'Language Project', to assess children's language and communication needs on entry is funded by the school. All children have an equal opportunity to succeed as steps are immediately taken to enable children to overcome any difficulties. The inspirational senior teacher, through very good liaison with outside agencies, ensures the exceptionally good provision for disabled children and those who have special educational needs. Systems for the care of children and the recruitment of staff are robust. All safeguarding requirements are fully met.

The curriculum is exceptionally well planned. The headteacher and staff have systems to record accurately children's progress towards the early learning goals in a number of forms and places. Although information clearly shows that children make rapid progress from their starting points, the data are not as easily accessible as they might be for the analysis of trends. The outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well through the rich, well-resourced and exciting provision. Topics reflecting other cultures, such as 'Chinese New Year' provide positive experiences which promote children's awareness of diversity within the wider world.

There is an excellent relationship with parents and carers. They are fully involved as partners in their children's learning. Because they receive very good information about their children's progress, they are able to help their children at home and contribute frequently to their children's learning journals. The parents and carers agree with the inspection judgement of outstanding leadership and management with many delightful comments such as, 'the staff go the extra mile to help you', and, 'I am delighted with the education, care and encouragement that my child receives'.

## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.



## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



27 April 2012

Dear Children

**Inspection of St Mary's Community Nursery School, Chester, CH4 7HS**

Thank you for being so welcoming and friendly when I came to watch you play in the nursery. I enjoyed seeing you have such a lot of fun and getting on with one another really well. I am writing to tell you what I have found out. St Mary's Community Nursery School is an outstanding school. Mr Jones and your teachers work extremely hard to take great care of you and help you do your very best.

I was pleased to see you sit and listen so well and enjoy talking together in your group times. You enjoyed the story of 'The Owl Babies', learning about why owls see so well in the dark and thinking about how sad you would feel if you were without anyone to take care of you. I know you understand how important it is to take care of each other. Well done for helping to tidy your toys, helping the new children find the aprons they need for painting and fastening coats when your friends need help.

I really enjoyed reading your learning journals and looking at the photographs of your exciting activities. What lovely books they are for you to keep when you leave the nursery. Your teachers know you all very well and how much you enjoy learning new things. To help make your school even better I have asked Mr Jones and the teachers to write down how well you are doing in a better way.

Well done to all of you, your families and teachers are very proud of you. Good wishes for the future and I hope you will carry on doing your best.

Yours sincerely

Anna Dawson  
Lead inspector

