

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Chingford, London E4 7BJ

LEA area: Waltham Forest

Unique reference number: 103085

Headteacher: Mrs J Higgon

Reporting inspector: Mrs J M Punnett
17826

Dates of inspection: 26th to 27th June 2000

Inspection number: 193534

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	5 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Station Road Chingford London E4 7BJ
Telephone number:	020 8529 4723
Fax number:	020 8529 1012
Appropriate authority:	The governing body of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School
Name of chair of governors:	Father M Stokes
Date of previous inspection:	June 1996

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary 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.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	
June Punnett	Registered inspector
Brian Jones	Lay inspector
Alan Britton	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Phoenix Educational Consultants
"Thule"
60 Joy Lane
Whitstable
Kent
CT5 4LT
01227 273449

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

Page

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

5

Information about the school
How good the school is
What the school does well
What could be improved
How the school has improved since its last inspection
Standards
Pupils' attitudes and values
Teaching and learning
Other aspects of the school
How well the school is led and managed
Parents' and carers' views of the school

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

9

Attainment in English, mathematics and science is well above national averages by the end of Year 6
Pupils' personal development, behaviour and attitudes to school are good
The provision for special educational needs is good
Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall
The leadership and management of the school are good

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

13

The attainment of pupils in science at the higher levels at Key Stage 1
The transference of handwriting skills to other areas of the curriculum at Key Stage 1
Pupils' attainment in music at both key stages

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

15

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

16

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's Catholic Primary School educates boys and girls between the ages of five and eleven. It is situated in Chingford, a residential area on the edge of Epping Forest. The site is shared with the parish church and the pupils who attend the school are drawn from the adjacent Catholic parishes. The accommodation is a mixture of older buildings and new additional buildings completed in April 2000. There are 218 pupils on roll organised into seven classes. There are 117 boys and 101 girls at the school. At the time of the inspection the school had three children aged under five who were taught in a Reception class. The majority of pupils come from homes with favourable socio-economic circumstances. The school is similar in size to other primary schools and the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. There are no pupils with English as an additional language at the school. About four per cent of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds which is below average. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including those with statements of special educational need, is below the national average. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is an effective school whose work is soundly underpinned by its Christian philosophy and ethos which successfully promote a caring community. The pupils leave the school with well above average standards in English and mathematics and above average standards in science when compared with similar schools. These standards are promoted by the good quality of teaching that the pupils receive, especially at Key Stage 2. The school is well led and managed although frequent staff changes have made it difficult for the new headteacher to build an effective team. The frequent staff changes, including two headteachers and a new deputy headteacher, in the past two years, have also made it difficult to develop the roles of the curriculum managers. Staff have left for a variety of reasons including relocation and promotion. The school continues to give good value for money.

What the school does well

- Attainment in English, mathematics and science is well above national averages by the end of Year 6 due to the consistently good quality of the teaching.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and attitudes to school are good and support their learning well.
- Provision for pupils' with special educational needs is good and promotes good progress.
- Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and the pupils respond very well.
- The leadership and management of the school are good and support the high standards attained by the pupils.

What could be improved

- Attainment in science at the higher Level 3 in Key Stage 1.
- The use of handwriting skills in other areas of the curriculum at Key Stage 1.
- Attainment in music at both key stages.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

St Mary's was last inspected in June 1996. Since then it has made a good improvement. Following its last inspection, the school produced a comprehensive action plan to address the key issues for action and this has been well implemented. Standards have risen in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 2. Standards in mathematics at Key Stage 1 in relation to similar schools, were well below average in the 1999 national tests. The current inspection finds an improvement in those standards at Key Stage 1. Satisfactory developmental work in music has been undertaken although it remains a weaker curriculum area. Schemes of work are present in all subjects; this is a good improvement since the last inspection. Planning shows more difficult activities for higher achieving pupils, especially at Key Stage 2, and this is carried forward into homework activities. These are good

improvements that are having a positive impact on the standards at the school. There has been a good improvement in the quality of teaching since the school's last inspection. At the time of that inspection, 89 per cent of lessons were satisfactory or better and 11 per cent unsatisfactory. In this inspection, no unsatisfactory lessons were seen and 100 per cent of lessons were satisfactory or better with a few examples of very good teaching seen at Key Stage 2. This improvement is directly attributable to the monitoring of teaching by the headteacher and her deputy and the willingness of staff to build on their good practices and to learn from each other. The major improvement has been to the development of the buildings, which were completed in May 2000. Many of the issues identified in the last report have been addressed well with the exception of site access, which remains an issue for the church and school to ensure the safety of parents and pupils. The church already has plans to redevelop the access to the site. As part of the building work, a new information technology suite has been created and this has now been equipped. The school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	All schools			Similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	A	A	A	A	well above average A above average B Average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	A	C	A	A	
Science	B	D	A	B	

The information shows that standards have been consistently average or well above average, apart from a dip in science in 1998, over the past three years. The school's rate of improvement has been broadly in line with the national trend. The school set realistic targets for the pupils' attainment in the 1999 end of Key Stage 2 tests and exceeded these targets in both English and mathematics. The findings of the current inspection agree with the school's test results and judge standards to be similar to the 1999 test outcomes. There are good improvements in information technology, judged as unsatisfactory during the last inspection, and standards are now similar to those found in other schools. Standards in art, design and technology, geography, history and physical education are similar to those found in other schools. In music, standards are below those found in other schools. Religious education was inspected by Section 23 inspectors for which a separate report will be available.

Standards in 1999 at Key Stage 1 show well above average attainment in reading, above average in writing and average attainment in mathematics when compared with schools nationally. In comparison with similar schools, standards in reading and writing are average and, in mathematics, are well below average. Pupils' progress in writing is not maximised at Key Stage 1 due, in part, to their handwriting skills not being transferred to other curriculum areas. Standards in science are above average at Level 2 or above but well below average at the higher Level 3 and no pupil attained this level in the 1999 national tests. In both mathematics and writing, trends show falling standards since 1996. The school has comprehensive action plans in place to address these issues and there are signs of improvement in both mathematics and science, as judged in this inspection. A few pupils have achieved the higher Level 3 in science this year although this number is still not high enough. The National Numeracy Strategy is having a positive impact on standards in mathematics at Key Stage 1. Children aged under five make satisfactory progress and are on course to attain the expected standards in all areas of learning by the age of five. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and reach satisfactory standards.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to come to school and are enthusiastic about learning. They enjoy lessons and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good, both in and out of lessons. There was no evidence of bullying or oppressive behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to care and show consideration for each other. They work well together.
Attendance	Good. It is above the national average with little incidence of lateness.

The enthusiasm of pupils and their very good attitudes to work contribute greatly to the good ethos in the school. Pupils' good behaviour, especially in the very small playground area, shows their good understanding of the school's code of conduct. Good attendance ensures that pupils' learning is not disrupted through absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Eighteen per cent of teaching observed during the inspection was very good or better and all of the teaching seen was at least satisfactory. The teaching of English and mathematics, including literacy and numeracy, is good. The teaching is of a consistently good quality although, overall, it is more consistent at Key Stage 2. All teachers have a good understanding of the teaching of basic skills and, apart from music, show confidence in teaching different subjects. The needs of all pupils are well met although teachers do not always sufficiently challenge the higher achieving pupils in science at Key Stage 1. The needs of the higher achieving pupils at Key Stage 2 are well met; this was an issue during the school's last inspection. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Assessment information is well used by all teachers to plan pupils' work. In the good or better lessons, teachers make it very clear what they expect the pupils to learn but this was less evident in the satisfactory lessons.

Throughout the school, pupils of all ages make good progress in their learning. They concentrate well in lessons and show a very good understanding of the expectations of behaviour and work set by teachers. When pupils are unclear about what they are expected to learn, they lose interest and make slower progress in their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Curricular provision is good and assists the pupils to make good progress in the majority of subjects. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils are well supported and are given appropriate work to help them make progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Spiritual and moral development are significant strengths. There are very close links with the church and good opportunities for spiritual and moral development through literature and assemblies. The opportunities for pupils' personal development and initiative are good.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school has good procedures in place to assess pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science. It also has very good procedures for promoting good behaviour and ensuring pupils' welfare.
--	---

The curriculum for the children under five takes account of the Desirable Learning Outcomes for children of this age. The needs of all pupils across the school are well met although insufficient challenges are offered to the higher achieving pupils in science and writing at Key Stage 1. The range of extra-curricular activities enables pupils to experience practical and sporting activities that enhance curricular opportunities well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The newly appointed headteacher gives clear educational direction to the school and sets high standards for staff and pupils to achieve. The headteacher and her deputy are effective in managing the staff and curriculum well. Job descriptions are being reviewed appropriately.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body has a good understanding of its responsibilities. Finances are managed efficiently and best value for money is sought when considering purchases. Governors give good support to the headteacher and her staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The monitoring of the school's performance is well planned and appropriately involves all key personnel. Realistic targets have been set for improvement. The monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher and her deputy is good and is having a positive impact on raising standards across the school.
The strategic use of resources	Good use is made of all staff, time, curricular resources and buildings. Staff are effectively deployed although the management role of teachers with responsibility for some subjects, such as music, is not well developed. The new information technology resources are satisfactorily utilised.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sense of belonging to a family school, a deeply caring community. Their children like school. The school's high expectations for behaviour and academic work. The school is well led and managed. Teaching is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More consultation about decisions involving special educational needs provision and the school's procedures. Stability at the school. Safe access to the school. More information about their child's progress. The range of activities which the school provides outside lessons.

The findings of the inspection support the positive views of parents. The issue of safe access remains a difficulty for the school, as does the instability of staffing. The inspectors found that parents receive frequent, good quality information about their child's progress. Although art club has been discontinued, there is a good number of extracurricular activities, for example, recorder, drama and French clubs, as well as a range of sporting opportunities for pupils, including a gymnastics club, run by the headteacher, for Year 2 pupils. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Attainment in English, mathematics and science is well above national averages

1. The 1999 national test results at the end of Key Stage 2 show that standards in English were well above those expected in all schools and in similar schools. Standards in mathematics have improved since the 1998 tests and in 1999 were well above those expected in all schools and in similar schools. In science, there has been a marked improvement since 1998 when standards were below the national average. In 1999, results showed standards well above those expected in all schools and above those found in similar schools. The high standards in English have been maintained since the last inspection and have improved in mathematics and science. The judgements of this inspection confirm these high levels of attainment in Key Stage 2.

2. The majority of children begin school with a well-developed vocabulary and are confident in articulating their needs. As they move through the school, pupils develop good speaking and listening skills. Good listening skills are evident in assemblies and during lessons across the school. Older pupils use scientific language competently, such as 'opaque', 'reflective' and 'rigid' to describe the properties of materials. In the upper junior classes, pupils explain clearly the structure of text writing in a literacy lesson.

3. A strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' reading skills and, by the age of seven, pupils confidently use a range of reading strategies and read a variety of good quality stories fluently and with assurance. As they move through the school, pupils experience a wider range of classical literature, such as "The Chronicles of Narnia" by C.S. Lewis and "The War of the Worlds" by H.G. Wells.

4. Writing skills are taught satisfactorily. Children in the Reception class are taught to put tails on their letters as soon as they are capable. In Year 1, pupils are encouraged to join their letters leading to legible writing by the age of seven. However, although pupils produce well formed writing in their handwriting exercise books, these skills are not always being transferred to other work at Key Stage 1, which results in lower than expected standards in writing. This is reflected in the 1999 key stage national test results. This inability to transfer writing skills slows down pupils' progress. Older pupils write imaginative book reviews and use their literacy skills well in other subjects, such as writing accounts of life as a member of the Iceni tribe when the Romans invaded Britain.

5. The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced well. The whole-class oral sessions are having a positive impact on the development of pupils' mental agility and skills. Higher achieving pupils are able to make generalisations about capacity and can manipulate factors, multiples and triangular numbers accurately. A few pupils can mentally convert fractions to decimals and percentages and all pupils have a good knowledge of tables. At Key Stage 1, pupils are becoming confident in using a range of strategies to work out sums to 20 and money values to a pound. They show good mental agility when calculating seven and four and its inverse operation. Extension activities for the higher achieving pupils in Year 2 are good such as adding mentally 152 and 125. These strengths are beginning to be reflected into good results in the national tests. Pupils who are experiencing more difficulties are well catered for in both key stages and make good progress in their learning.

6. In science, pupils investigate air resistance and show good understanding of chemical changes and food chains. They use their numeracy skills well when measuring circumferences of the skull and the differences between the lengths of forearms in boys and girls. Pupils use their literacy skills well to describe the principles of food chains. At Key Stage 1, pupils accurately sort materials into natural and man-made and suggest reasons why they belong to particular groups. They understand about healthy menus and make jelly to test their theories. Pupils accurately record how to wire a circuit. During the inspection, evidence indicated that the newly adopted guidelines were beginning to have a positive impact on standards and that a few pupils are on course to achieve the higher Level 3 in science this year. However, expectations are insufficiently high in the subject.

7. Since the last inspection, standards in English, mathematics and science have improved at Key Stage 2, especially at the higher Level 5. At the last inspection, attainment was good with pupils reaching at least the national average in all three subjects. In English, attainment is now well above the national average and in mathematics and science, it is above the national average. At Key Stage 1, the current findings are not as good due to a fall in standards in mathematics and a slower decline in writing standards over the past three years. Writing standards are, however, still above those found in most schools. Standards in mathematics have begun to rise due to the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy.

Pupils' personal development, behaviour and attitudes to school are good.

8. The good standards of behaviour and pupils' very good attitudes remain a strength of the school. The attitudes and values promoted by the school have strong parental support. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning, concentrate well during lessons and show helpful, caring attitudes towards each other when working in groups. Throughout the school, they understand the purpose of schooling and work hard to achieve their best. Behaviour is good both in and out of lessons. Children aged under five play in the Key Stage 1 area, they behave sensibly and show maturity in their personal development. In a very restricted playground area, older pupils show consideration for the needs of the younger junior pupils and restrain their natural exuberance very well in the limited space. Personal relationships are good between pupils and with adults. Good opportunities exist through assemblies and lessons for pupils' personal development. Good opportunities are also provided through extra-curricular activities such as football, athletics and gymnastics. Although a few parents commented about bullying through the questionnaires and at the parents' meeting, during the inspection there was no evidence of any bullying and all the pupils asked about this, during playtimes and at lunchtimes, had no knowledge of any instances. The school has effective procedures in place to deal with bullying should it occur. Attendance is above the national average and there have been no recent exclusions.

Provision for special educational needs is good.

9. The last inspection found the support for pupils with special educational needs to be effective. This has improved and is now judged to be good. The co-ordinator for special educational needs is a part time teacher who gives full support to all the pupils on the register. Some of this support is class based but, at other times, pupils are given one-to-one support in the special educational needs area. The quality of support is good. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and works well with class teachers to help pupils attain their individual targets. Support is also given to higher achievers. Although there is no qualified special educational needs teacher at the school because her contract was not renewed, there is additional support given when necessary by a qualified literacy assistant. The part-

time special educational needs co-ordinator also supports small groups across the key stages. In addition, pupils receive some support from a learning support assistant in a nearby local school.

10. Individual education plans are reviewed every six to eight weeks to facilitate the movement off the special educational needs register. The quality of individual education plans is good, and clearly identifies targets to help individuals make progress in their learning. There is a good system in place where parents are invited for an interview before the child is placed on the special educational needs register. Parents are regularly included in the review of individual education plans and are kept informed of pupils' progress. There are very good links with outside agencies including the educational psychologist who visits the school three times a year, nurse and occupational and speech therapist. A few parents expressed their concern over the centrally employed special educational needs assistant's contract not being renewed. There appears to have been a misunderstanding as some internal reorganisation has taken place with staffing and provision.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

11. The last inspection judged this area of the school's work to be 'appropriate'. This inspection finds that the provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is very good, and that the provision for social and cultural development is good. Overall, the inspection judges this area to be a strength of the school thus showing considerable improvement since the last inspection.

12. The mission statement reflects the importance of teaching and learning within the precepts of the Catholic faith and this is evident during assemblies where prayer and reflection enable pupils to develop their spiritual awareness. Prayers are an important part of the school day such as thanking God for food at lunchtimes before the start of afternoon lessons. The last inspection found that insufficient opportunities were given for reflection during assemblies, this is no longer the case. Another criticism was that art and music were not fully utilised as a means of exploring these dimensions of learning. This remains the case in music: most singing is unaccompanied, there is no school choir and pupils' musical talents are not fully shared with the rest of the school. Teachers also miss opportunities to illustrate different styles of music and composers during some assemblies. There has been an improvement in the use of art to extend and enrich pupils' experiences and good examples of work in the style of Picasso are used in corridor displays.

13. The school has effective systems in place to teach pupils about the differences between right and wrong. This is firmly rooted in the teachings of the Catholic faith and, in discussions with pupils, they show a very good understanding of these principles for living. In lessons, pupils are encouraged to consider the views of others. For example, in a Year 3 history lesson, pupils were asked to consider what it would have been like to have their land and property taken away by the Romans. Pupils' ideas resulted in their developing an understanding of rights and wrongs in history and how these related to their own experiences. The positive approach to behaviour in the school, where each pupil is valued for his or her own worth, successfully promotes very good moral values. All adults have the same high expectations of behaviour. They provide a structured and caring environment in which pupils can develop sound moral principles. Staff also provide very good role models as a hardworking and committed team and this ethos is passed on to pupils. Parents greatly appreciate the values that the school seeks to teach.

14. Pupils' self esteem is fostered through art, poetry and drama. An after school drama club for the older pupils in Key Stage 2 enriches their experience. Pupils are encouraged to

take responsibility for one another and to participate fully in school life. Older pupils at Key Stage 2 take on responsibility as monitors during play times to help the younger pupils. Class monitors have responsibilities throughout the school and generally develop their independence well. Some opportunities are lost, however, during some assemblies such as helping to change the overhead projector sheets and removing staff chairs. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to work together collaboratively and pupils respond well during lessons and listen to each other with interest and respect. A range of extra-curricular sporting activities enhances the development of social skills. Older pupils undertake a five-day residential visit in Year 6 and this provides further opportunities to develop skills of co-operation and working together.

15. Pupils are taught to understand and respect other faiths, cultures and approaches to life. Links with a community project in Zambia support multi-cultural understanding well, exemplified by a display of pictures, artefacts and letters. Teachers also use opportunities across the curriculum, particularly in drama, history and geography, to point out aspects of their own heritage and of the cultural traditions of others. Visits to Kentwell in Suffolk to experience life in Tudor times and to the Second World War museum in North Weald are examples that enrich the curriculum. Throughout the year, pupils at both key stages have good opportunities to participate in workshops with visiting theatre groups and some useful music workshops have taken place to support class topics such as a Tudor music workshop at the Globe Theatre. Feast day celebrations are enhanced by visits from a Christian pop band although, overall, music does not make a good contribution to the daily life of the school.

The leadership and management of the school are good

16. The previous inspection found leadership and management to be a strength and this remains the case, even though the newly appointed headteacher has not yet completed a year at the school. It has been a difficult time for the school during the past two years as there have been many significant staff changes: two headteachers, a new deputy head and almost 50 per cent of the staff leaving each year for a variety of reasons. For example, two years ago, when the long serving head left to take up another appointment, the deputy left as did three other senior teachers. For personal reasons, the next headteacher left having just appointed a new deputy. This current academic year sees three more teachers leaving for relocation, change of responsibility and career change. Although very unsettling for the school, the headteacher and her deputy have established a satisfactory working partnership that, at present, is providing the basis for stability for the school.

17. The aims of the school are reflected in its everyday life and they make a strong contribution to the standards achieved and to the ethos of St Mary's. The school has a clear sense of educational direction and the staff and most of the parents understand this. The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher, staff and governors. The staff are hardworking and committed to the school. They are well managed and make a good contribution to the management of the school through the shared Christian values that are reflected in their work. Teachers with curricular responsibilities have varying degrees of expertise, ranging from those who contribute to the Local Education Authority's in-service programme to those who are in their second year of teaching. The monitoring of curriculum areas has been successfully undertaken by the literacy and numeracy co-ordinators and the headteacher has formally monitored the quality of teaching in all classes. Teachers with other subject responsibilities have less opportunity to evaluate the teaching of their subjects. The roles and responsibilities of curriculum co-ordinators, especially in subjects other than English, mathematics and science, are not always clearly

understood. Job descriptions are currently under review for all staff. Targets are set for individual pupils and these help to drive standards forwards.

18. The governing body is effective and fulfils its statutory responsibilities. Governors are suitably involved in the work of the school and contribute well to its ethos and success. The relationship between the governing body and the school is good. The budget is well managed and planned to support the priorities in the school development plan. The large carry forward figure was appropriately identified for the building works and creation of the new computer suite. Funds allocated for staff training and for pupils with special educational needs are well spent although there is no trained special educational needs assistant to give pupils support during lessons. The school office is welcoming and provides a good first reference point for the school. The accommodation is bright, airy and well maintained. The main key issue at the time of the last inspection concerned the state of the accommodation. The governing body has addressed this issue very well and the changes to the accommodation are excellent. The issue of access to the school across the church car park remains to be resolved but the church already has plans in hand to ensure the safety of pupils and parents as they walk between parishioners' vehicles to gain access to the school. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall, although there is a weakness in the adequacy of musical instruments and in their availability and access.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The attainment of pupils at the higher Level 3 in science at Key Stage 1

19. In the 1999 national tests, no pupil at Key Stage 1 attained the higher Level 3 in science. In this year's tests, a few pupils are on course to achieve this level. This is due in part to the lack of challenge for these pupils across the key stage through the failure to plan work that is well matched to the needs of the higher achieving pupils. Although information technology is used occasionally, it supports learning insufficiently in the subject and this restricts pupils' progress. The previous inspection found that pupils' attainment was in line with the national expectations for seven year olds and that higher achieving pupils underachieved at Key Stage 2 in science. This inspection finds that the issue for Key Stage 2 pupils has been well addressed, with 45 per cent of those pupils attaining the higher Level 5, but that improvements have been less successful at Key Stage 1.

20. The curriculum is well covered and appropriate time is given to science. By the age of seven, pupils accurately name parts of the body and the eye. They sort plants into various groups, sow seeds and record their growth. Literacy and numeracy skills are well used. There is little evidence of challenges being offered to the higher achieving pupils in their books. For example, although pupils record the growth of a mustard seed, they do not think like scientists and predict the 'what if' questions in science. Teaching in the subject generally lacks urgency and this leads to lower than expected standards at the higher levels. The previous inspection also found that opportunities to extend pupils' ideas through probing questions are missed and, in the work seen, this remains the case.

The use of handwriting skills in other areas of the curriculum in Key Stage 1

21. In the 1999 national tests for writing, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 3 or above was close to the national average and the evidence of the current inspection indicates that there is an improvement in this year's performance at the higher levels. However, many pupils in the key stage experience difficulty with handwriting when transferring the learned skills to other parts of their work. For example, many Year 2 pupils produce neat, well-formed letters in their handwriting exercise books but this is not always

reflected when writing stories or writing about aspects of history and geography. There are few opportunities for pupils to gain confidence in writing stories through using the computer.

22. The previous inspection found that there was inconsistency in the school's approach to the teaching of handwriting and the school, overall, had identified writing as an area for development. This has, in part, been satisfactorily addressed, although handwriting remains an area for further development. The co-ordinator has put in place a comprehensive action plan to help increase the speed and fluency of handwriting. A new handwriting scheme is helping to develop skills but the transference of these skills is not yet evident in pupils' books. Writing assessments are undertaken to highlight strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work and the setting of individual targets helps pupils to make progress in their learning. The staff have received in-service training on extending the higher achievers in writing. The present co-ordinator has been trained as a temporary literacy consultant to the Local Education Authority and has devised a comprehensive action plan that is already leading to improvements.

Attainment in music at both key stages

23. The previous inspection report judged that pupils' attainment was in line with that expected for their ages. The current inspection finds that, apart from singing, where standards are average at both key stages, attainment is below that found in other schools.

24. Opportunities for pupils to compose or develop an appreciation of the works of famous composers are limited and this remains a weak aspect of the subject. This was also the case in the school's previous inspection. During assemblies, pupils sing to taped music, or unaccompanied, and staff with musical talents are reluctant to share them with the rest of the school. There is no school choir. Pupils generally enjoy singing: a good example was a group of Year 5 pupils who invited inspectors to listen to their harmonic singing before a class assembly. There are opportunities for pupils to have instrumental music tuition provided by the Local Education Authority and the school runs a recorder group. However, music is not central to the life of St Mary's and there are too few opportunities to draw pupils' attention to different styles of music and composers in assemblies. There is no musical ensemble to share music with the rest of the school and many enriching opportunities are lost. Music is making an insufficient contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

25. Although there is a clear composing element in the commercial scheme used by the school, this is a weak area of teaching and learning. There are insufficient musical instruments for a whole class and only one trolley for use by both key stages. The policy is being updated to link it to the new requirements for Curriculum 2000. The co-ordinator is a relatively new teacher; she is keen and enthusiastic about the subject but lacks sufficient knowledge of how to co-ordinate the subject effectively across two key stages. There has been limited non-contact time available for her to develop her role.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The school has identified points for improvement in its own planning, both in writing and science and, in order to improve and build upon standards achieved, the headteacher and governors should now:

(1) Raise standards in science at the higher Level 3 in Key Stage 1 by:

- raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in science;
- developing the use of information technology to support the higher achieving pupils;
- assessing science more rigorously to identify the potentially higher achieving pupils earlier;
- enabling the co-ordinator to give greater support to the Key Stage 1 teachers through assisting with planning and monitoring of teaching in the subject.

(paragraphs 12, 15, 17, 23, 24, 25)

(2) Further develop pupils' ability to transfer their handwriting skills at Key Stage 1 to all areas of the curriculum by:

- raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve when writing;
- affording opportunities for pupils to develop their own personal writing;
- developing the use of information technology to improve pupils' confidence when writing stories;
- identifying aspects of handwriting for pupils to focus on, for example, writing an historical account or writing up a scientific experiment.

(paragraphs 4, 21, 22)

(3) Raise pupils' attainment in music at both key stages by:

- updating the policy for music so that it more accurately reflects the new curricular arrangements;
- providing in-service training for teachers to help raise their levels of confidence in teaching music;
- improving the range of musical instruments in classrooms and making those available to the rest of the school more easily accessible to pupils and staff;
- giving music a higher profile in the life of the school during assemblies and in enhancing work in other curriculum areas;
- providing more training for the co-ordinator in developing skills to lead a subject across two key stages.

(paragraphs 12, 15, 17, 23, 24, 25)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	17
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	24

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	18	58	24	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	218
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	35

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	20	12	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	19	18
	Girls	11	11	12
	Total	30	30	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (96)	94 (96)	94 (97)
	National	82 [80]	83 [81]	87 [84]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	19	19
	Girls	11	12	12
	Total	30	31	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94(93)	97 (97)	97 (94)
	National	82 [81]	86 [85]	87[86]

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	19	14	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	16	18
	Girls	13	13	12
	Total	30	29	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	91 (85)	88 (58)	91 (70)
	National	70 [65]	69 [59]	78 [69]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	16	18
	Girls	13	14	12
	Total	30	30	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	91 (91)	91 (85)	91 (97)
	National	68 [65]	69 [65]	75 [72]

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	178
Any other minority ethnic group	7

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.3:1
Average class size	31.1:1

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	66

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	N/a
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/a

Total number of education support staff	N/a
Total aggregate hours worked per week	N/a

Number of pupils per FTE adult	N/a
--------------------------------	-----

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999
----------------	------

	£
Total income	440018
Total expenditure	432090
Expenditure per pupil	1974
Balance brought forward from previous year	71601
Balance carried forward to next year	79529

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	218
Number of questionnaires returned	91

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	30	0	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	58	36	0	7	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	43	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	37	4	11	1
The teaching is good.	61	34	1	3	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	42	3	14	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	32	0	5	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	33	0	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	43	43	1	11	2
The school is well led and managed.	43	49	1	7	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	40	0	5	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	34	5	6	9