

# INSPECTION REPORT

**MELLOR ST MARY CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
(VA) PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Mellor

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119424

Headteacher: Mrs C Taylor

Reporting inspector: Fran Gillam  
21498

Dates of inspection: 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> March 2002

Inspection number: 197942

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infants and junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 4 – 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Brundhurst Fold  
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Blackburn  
Lancashire

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Reverend JP Hudson

Date of previous inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> October 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Mellor St Mary is smaller than most other primaries. The number on roll is 130 pupils; 57 are boys and 73 are girls. The school is a Voluntary Aided Church of England primary and it is in the village of Mellor between Preston and Blackburn. Almost three quarters of the school's population come from the village of Mellor. There are 14 children in the Foundation Stage<sup>1</sup> and they are taught with the younger Year 1 pupils. All five classes have mixed age ranges except for Year 6. During the morning pupils are taught in separate year groups and so the classes increase to seven. The children's attainment when they start school is above that expected for their age. There are eight per cent of pupils on the special educational needs' register, which is below average, and one pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Almost all pupils come from a white British background; there are five pupils from other ethnic backgrounds, all of whom can communicate well in English. Since the last inspection there have been three headteachers and a new deputy headteacher, and two part-time members of staff have been replaced. After a period of staffing changes the school now has a full complement of permanently appointed teaching staff.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Mellor St Mary is a sound school; it is improving following a difficult period of staff changes. Standards are very high in mathematics, well above average in science, much better than expected in speaking and listening, well above average in reading and average in writing. Teaching is good in mathematics and the basic skills in English are taught effectively. The pupils work hard and they enjoy learning and this speeds their progress. The headteacher, staff and governors are a good team because they recognise what they need to do to improve the school even further. The arrangements the school has for checking how well pupils and staff are doing provides good information, which is then used to set whole school targets for improvement. Some of this work has only really got underway since the appointment of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. It is too early to evaluate whether all the action the school is taking to further improve its performance is bearing fruit. However early indications show that pupils' skills in reading and writing are improving. The school gives sound value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The teaching of the basic skills of reading, writing and number is good and result in very high standards in mathematics and the well above average standards in English.
- Pupils speak confidently and listen well to adults and each other.
- Pupils enjoy school; they work hard, behave very well and work effectively together.
- The headteacher is building an effective teaching team; together they are bringing about change for the better.

#### **What could be improved**

- Teachers do not plan enough chances for pupils to use and extend their writing skills.
- Pupils do not always know how to improve their work because teachers' marking does not give sufficient guidance.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

There has been good improvement since the last inspection in October 1997. The school has maintained standards by Year 6 against an improving national picture. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have improved by Year 2. Pupils throughout the school now behave very well. Parents are happy that their children are developing positive attitudes towards school. There is now good provision for pupils' moral and social development, which shows in the way that pupils relate to one another and the staff. There are better arrangements in place to monitor the behaviour of pupils and all pupils are clear of what is expected from them. The school now has good arrangements to track how well pupils are learning and the staff use this information effectively to support and guide groups of pupils as well as individuals. The procedures for checking what is working well and what needs improving in teaching are now better than they were and the analysis of test results, teachers' planning and pupils' work is effective in identifying areas for improvement. The quality of

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<sup>1</sup> The stage of learning for children from age three to the end of the Reception Year.

teaching has improved; it is now satisfactory or better in all lessons. The school has put in place a health and safety policy, which provides clear guidance for staff and governors.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	A	A	A	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	A*	A	A*	A	
Science	A	B	B	C	

Results in the tests in 2001 were well above average in English and in the top five per cent of all schools in mathematics; results were above average in science. When the pupils' performance in 2001 is compared to that in similar schools to Mellor St Mary's, the pupils did very well in mathematics and broadly the same as other pupils in English and science. The standards in mathematics the pupils are attaining in the present Year 6 reflect those of 2001. Standards are well above average in reading, speaking and listening and average in writing. Even though a great deal has been done to develop and strengthen pupils' reading and writing skills, standards in writing could be higher if pupils were given more chances to use their writing skills to develop and record their ideas in other subjects. Pupils throughout the school make good progress in learning the basic skills of literacy. Pupils' skills in recalling number facts and tackling mathematical problems are impressive. This develops very well throughout the school and is a major factor in the very high standards in mathematics by both Year 2 and Year 6. The demands made upon pupils of different abilities result in the good achievements of all pupils in mathematics, speaking, listening and the skills of reading and writing. The school sets itself challenging but realistic targets for the pupils in English and mathematics by Year 6. The school's trend in improving standards is broadly in line with the national trend.

By Year 2, standards are well above average in reading and writing and very high in mathematics. By the time children in the Reception Year move into Year 1 they attain standards above those expected for their age in mathematical development and communication, language and literacy.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good – pupils enjoy school; they work hard, concentrate well in lessons and offer their ideas and thoughts willingly.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good – pupils know the difference between right and wrong and behave very well in and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good – there are good working relationships. Pupils organise themselves effectively and share ideas sensibly.
Attendance	Very good – pupils like coming to school; the attendance rate is well above average.

The older pupils organise themselves very well; they share ideas and listen to the views of their classmates with respect and consideration.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	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.*

The teaching of mathematics and the basic skills in English is good. From the time children start school through to Year 6, teachers place a strong emphasis upon giving pupils plenty of opportunities to consolidate their skills, knowledge and understanding in literacy and numeracy. However, teachers make few links between subjects, for example developing writing skills learned in literacy to write historical or geographical accounts. Sometimes in these subjects worksheets limit the chance for pupils to develop and extend their learning further because they require short answers or pupils to copy out information. Teachers are particularly effective in developing pupils' mental mathematics skills. Quick-fire questions, varying in demand, ensure that all pupils, whatever their ability, are involved fully and learning very well. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support and this ensures that they do well. Pupils of all abilities work at a good rate because the demands made upon them allow them to work at a level of challenge suitable to their needs. Pupils rise to the challenges set for them; this shows in their interest and concentration and how quickly and accurately they answer questions. Throughout the school, the pupils develop quick methods for calculating, for example the totals of numbers; this makes them adept at solving complex mathematical problems. Teachers share their knowledge of literacy and numeracy effectively with the pupils. This shows in the way that pupils know what is expected of them, how quickly they settle to their work and the manner in which they use, for example, the correct grammatical terms or mathematical language to explain their work. Whilst teachers mark pupils' work regularly, they include very few comments that summarise how well pupils have done and what they need to do to improve. Consequently, pupils do not take enough responsibility for their own learning. In some classes, teachers set targets for the pupils but this is not always systematic. Improving both teachers' marking and the system for setting individual targets would not only help pupils to improve aspects of their work, such as thinking about, for example, how the characters develop in their stories, but also provide useful information for other adults working with the pupils; particularly where teaching of a class is shared.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory – the school offers a range of activities relevant to the needs and interests of the pupils but using other subjects as a means of developing writing skills is not good enough.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good – teachers make good use of resources to involve pupils with special educational needs fully in lessons; this speeds the pupils' progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good – teachers set good examples for the pupils to follow. All pupils are aware of the impact of their actions upon others because they are taught the difference between right and wrong effectively. There are good chances for pupils to work together in pairs or groups and this teaches them how to be respectful and considerate of others.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory – the arrangements for monitoring behaviour have improved but pupils should be more involved in aspects of their own learning. Teachers do not give pupils clear pointers for improvement in their work.

The strategy for teaching mathematics is most effective; teachers plan mathematical activities carefully, setting high expectations for how well the pupils can do.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good – the headteacher provides good leadership; the deputy headteacher provides very good support. The headteacher is building a team of committed and hardworking staff. There is a clear idea of what needs to be done to improve the school even more.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory – the governors now have a better grasp of their roles and responsibilities. They are developing their role as a 'critical friend' effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory – the evaluation of standards, and of teaching and learning, has only been underway for 18 months. This work is bringing about change but some of the action is not yet bearing fruit.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory – funding is directed upon supporting teaching and learning and raising standards. The school has a larger than recommended under-spend but there are suitable arrangements in place to reduce the carry forward.

There are sufficient resources to support the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The headteacher and governors consult with both pupils and parents; they compare the school's standards with schools of similar backgrounds to check how well the school is performing and challenge the teaching methods they use. This has brought about training for staff in teaching literacy and introducing teaching methods to help both boys and girls learn more effectively.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school expects the children to do their best and to be mature and responsible.</li> <li>• Their children like school and make good progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information about how well their children are getting on.</li> </ul>

The team agrees with the positive views of parents. The school provides two meetings a year for parents to discuss their children's work in addition to their child's annual progress report. The quality of the reports sent to parents is satisfactory; however, in some classes, the targets for improvement could be more precise.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**The teaching of the basic skills of reading, writing and number is good and result in very high standards in mathematics and the well above average standards in English.**

1. The strategy for teaching mathematics is effective throughout the school. Teachers share mathematical information clearly and so pupils gain a very good understanding of how to calculate, solve and arrange numbers to solve problems and explain their answers. Pupils are interested and inspired because lessons are often lively and brisk.
2. Pupils do particularly well in solving mathematical problems in their heads. This is because teachers carefully prepare the questions they ask pupils. Because questions range in difficulty, and involve increasingly larger numbers, they challenge and include pupils of differing abilities. This not only places the right demand on the pupils but also helps them to grow in confidence. Pupils quickly learn speedy ways to calculate totals in their heads. For example, by Year 2, higher attaining pupils accurately add ten, 20 and 30 to numbers greater than 20. They do this swiftly, confidently and eagerly. Importantly, not only higher attaining but also average attaining and lower attaining pupils are able to discuss what they have done. The pupil support assistants provide effective support for pupils with individual needs and the lower attaining pupils. Aids to their learning such as number squares, that help them count on quickly and accurately, are at hand. These pupils benefit from the gentle prompting and guidance they receive that helps to build their self-esteem and challenges them to have a go. Both boys and girls really enjoy the work; during one lesson, for example, there was a genuine expression of disappointment when they had to move on to the next part of the lesson.
3. By Year 6, this love of manipulating numbers, and solving problems quickly and effectively, speeds pupils' learning and results in competent and skilled mathematicians. Teachers make high demands on pupils, which they rise to eagerly. Pupils have a very good grasp of how to group numbers to total large amounts quickly. During an effective session leading on to measuring angles, the teacher asked pupils to find three numbers that either added up to 180 or 360. The task soon increased in difficulty when pupils were told that none of the numbers could end in zero or five and all must include at least two digits. The effective use of wipe clean boards to record work ensured that the teacher could check pupils' methods and help any pupils should they struggle. As in the Year 2 class, pupils who sometimes find this type of work more challenging were supported effectively and fully involved.
4. Teaching probes pupils' mathematical thinking well and encourages them to try out different ways of solving problems. This is a strong feature of how the pupils learn and encourages them to trust in their instincts and draw upon what they already know. In a very effective lesson in Year 2, pupils of different abilities read carefully and correctly suggested the best ways of solving problems. They used their reading and mathematical skills effectively to decide whether they needed to add, subtract or multiply the numbers in the problems to find the answer. Similarly, in Year 6, pupils drew upon their previous work to make sensible suggestions as to why the teacher had asked them to draw a triangle and horizontal line in their books. They put forward an impressive range of ideas, all of which had sound mathematical reasoning, and did so confidently and with clear explanations. This strategy ensured that pupils fully understood that triangles do not have to have three acute angles but could only have one that is obtuse. This skilfully led pupils into solving the problem: "Can you draw a four-sided shape with four acute angles?" Throughout lessons pupils work purposefully, their mathematics work is often set within a problem-solving context, and pupils of all abilities and also both boys and girls really enjoy the challenge this provides. Teaching is effective in building on what pupils already know and by placing the right level of demand, so that individuals move on quickly with their learning. This, along with the pupils' love and enthusiasm for mathematics, contributes to the very high standards the school achieves by both Year 2 and Year 6.

5. Teachers place a strong emphasis upon making sure that pupils have a good understanding of the basic skills of reading and writing. As in mathematics, they recognise the need for pupils to practise and reinforce their knowledge, for example of letter sounds, and to develop their understanding of how to tackle unfamiliar text to read confidently and with meaning. By Year 2, pupils read carefully; they notice when a character in the story is speaking and begin to change the tone of their voice to make their reading more expressive. Pupils are quick to notice the different types of punctuation in the text and explain their uses correctly. For example, higher attaining pupils know that a colon and commas punctuate lists of items. They discuss why they would use exclamation marks and know that when they write a question, it should always have a question mark at the end. Both higher attaining and average attaining pupils know when to use speech marks and lower attaining pupils correctly identify them within text. Throughout the school, this emphasis upon encouraging pupils to notice and explain the uses of punctuation means that, by Year 6, the pupils' writing is often accurately punctuated. Teachers also provide good models to help pupils develop their writing. They encourage pupils to use adventurous words and show them how to write for different reasons, such as play scripts, letter writing and poetry. Because of this, pupils have a good understanding of how to structure their writing for different purposes and they use lively language that interests the reader. In Year 6, this was particularly noticeable when pupils were developing their own detective stories following reading a short excerpt from *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The teacher skilfully guided pupils to consider how the writer had used different parts of the text to set the scene for the action, summarise the action so far and provide further clues to help solve the crime. Further discussion drew upon the pupils' own knowledge of crime stories and the ones which had the greatest appeal. Pupils suggested, "There is often a 'sidekick' who helps the detective to solve the clues," and "The best types of crime stories don't have an obvious ending!" This sharing of ideas provided a very good stimulus to the next part of the task when pupils worked in pairs to devise their own outline plan for a detective story written as a play script. Arranging the pupils to work in pairs proved an effective method to ensure that all pupils were fully involved. Pupils with special educational needs and the lower attaining had very good support because they shared their ideas whilst a higher attaining or average attaining pupil jotted these down. This brought about a high level of discussion and co-operation, and learning moved along briskly. Partnerships produced a range of crime plots and some pupils drew on earlier work in literacy to add interest to their titles or characters, for example *Murder at Moonlight Manor* (alliteration) and the lonely millionairess Miss Blue! By the end of the lesson, pupils had a very good understanding of the key features of crime story writing and how to develop their ideas into a play script. However, as yet, the teachers miss chances to show pupils how to use what they know about writing to develop and record their ideas in other subjects. The emphasis upon the basic skills of writing provides pupils with an effective framework for using their skills in other areas of the curriculum.

### **Pupils speak confidently and listen well to adults and each other.**

6. Throughout the school pupils listen well and take notice of what adults and other pupils have to say. The youngest children enjoy listening to stories and like the chance to join in and read with the teacher. They offer their ideas and can extend their answers when given the chance. Finger puppets provide useful opportunities to help children to develop their understanding of characters in stories and to read expressively. The children listen carefully in assemblies; for example, they were totally gripped by the older pupils' performance of Pandora's box. Their reactions showed they fully understood what was happening. By Year 1, pupils build on these good features of listening and talking and are confident in their interactions with adults and express their ideas clearly. This was evident in a literacy lesson when creating their view of a story character. Their suggestions showed a good level of thought and proved a useful prompt when they made a poster asking for help in finding the Lost Witch.
7. By the time pupils are in Year 2, their talk is lively and bubbly and they eagerly want to share their thoughts and ideas with others. They clearly express what they think, showing they have

listened well. For example, in a literacy lesson the higher attaining pupils not only correctly identified speech marks in the text but confidently went on to explain other types of punctuation with no prompting from the teacher. They used examples to strengthen their account such as the use of exclamation marks to show when someone is surprised or making a point. This showed the pupils' ability to communicate their ideas, using the correct type of language, and their understanding of the main points of the discussion. Average attaining and lower attaining pupils are also able to include detail to support what they are talking about. For example, in numeracy they competently describe a quick way to add nine to any number: "First you add one to the nine to make it ten, add on the number and take one away from the answer."

8. These positive features of speaking and listening develop further by the time pupils move into the junior classes. It shows in the way that pupils express their ideas and voice their opinions. For example, pupils in Year 4 evaluated the poem *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. They used words such as 'vulnerable' to describe how the people were feeling and discussed what they liked and did not like about the poem; for example: "the poet has used expressive language but some of the lines are too long and they spoil the rhythm." Importantly, pupils could suggest ways of improving the work.
9. Opportunities to take part in performances also help pupils to develop their speaking skills. During an assembly for parents, pupils spoke clearly and confidently. Their play about Pandora's box went well because they had prepared well, they paced their presentation and they spoke expressively.
10. By Year 6, opportunities for pupils to prepare presentations for others are effective. Pupils research a topic of their choice and teachers expect them to hold the interest of their classmates for between five and ten minutes. This is a weekly feature and teachers expect pupils to listen carefully and to pose questions for the speaker; they do this extremely well. For example, one pupil spoke knowledgeably about a favourite computer program and the level of detail and variation in his/her expression kept pupils interested. Explanations of how the program worked were clear and supported by telling examples. The pupils listened attentively and then asked sensible questions, which the speaker answered well.
11. There are good chances for pupils to discuss important issues. Following the visit of the 'Drugs' Bus', pupils discussed the effects of drugs on the body and why some teenagers take drugs. The teacher provided a very good lead into the discussion by looking at news headlines relating to road accidents as a result of drug abuse. Pupils very confidently put forward their views. The research work they had done at home allowed them to talk knowledgeably about the dangers of abusing both prescribed and illegal drugs. Pupils of different abilities were fully involved as the teacher asked them their views, and posed questions such as "Why do people take drugs?" and "Why do some people sell them?" One pupil suggested that this was due to "supply and demand." Pupils' understanding developed well and their ideas flowed as they talked about television programmes they had seen and newspaper articles they had read. By the end of the lesson, pupils were able to present their ideas in a balanced way, recognising the dangers of the misuse of drugs but also the reasons why some people are driven to abuse them. These planned opportunities, and the level of discussion encouraged in lessons, contribute very well to pupils' speaking and listening skills. It shows in the way that most pupils by Year 6 talk and listen with assurance both on a formal and informal level, and also in the way that pupils listen attentively to others, take account of others' views, and ask questions to clarify their thinking and to develop their ideas.

### **Pupils enjoy school; they work hard, behave very well and work effectively together.**

12. Pupils like school and make the most of it. Lessons are interesting and teachers encourage pupils to share their ideas and voice their opinions. Pupils feel happy and valued because staff appreciate their efforts. Teachers praise pupils when they do well and this spurs them on to try harder.

13. The children in the Reception Year like to get fully involved in their lessons. For example, when reading the story of the Billy Goats Gruff they were thrilled to have puppets to work with. Without prompting they joined in the story. Their suggestions showed they had taken note because they related what they were talking about to what they had heard. For example, they suggested that the bold type in the print emphasised when the Troll was speaking loudly. They were eager to show what they knew; for example, without being asked they talked about how the characters' names started with capital letters. Children know how to take turns and when to listen to what others have to say. They are alert, inquisitive and want to learn. This gives them a flying start and, together with their very good behaviour, allows activities to run smoothly and speeds learning.
14. Throughout the school, teachers develop these positive aspects of learning effectively. Coupled with the pupils' very good behaviour, it makes the school a happy place to work and learn in. Teachers explain to pupils what they are going to learn and why. This helps the pupils to tackle activities with assurance and settle quickly to their work. Both boys and girls offer their ideas willingly because teachers make sure that they are fully involved. They pose questions that challenge the different groups of pupils in the class. This ensures that the demand provides the chance for all pupils to contribute. Because teachers value pupils' efforts the pupils are not fearful of making a mistake and this helps them to participate fully. Older pupils co-operate very well. For example, in a science lesson in Years 4 and 5, pupils organised themselves efficiently. The teacher expected the pupils to work with a high level of independence and they did this very well. The pupils used the time effectively to collect resources, to set up their investigation and to carry it out systematically. Effective working partnerships not only in science but also in literacy and numeracy mean that higher attaining pupils are sometimes paired with pupils of other abilities. In literacy, for example, all pupils share ideas, then one writes down all of the ideas whilst the lower attaining pupil develops their thoughts further. This is effective in involving all pupils in the activity but it also encourages higher attaining pupils to recognise how they can help and support the work of others. In group work, pupils work effectively, share ideas and respect the views of others; this was apparent in a number of lessons and contributes well to the high level of harmony in classrooms.
15. Since the last inspection there has been considerable improvement in pupils' behaviour. There are good arrangements in place to help pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. The school involves pupils in identifying the features of good and unacceptable behaviour and this provides an effective basis for helping pupils understand how they should treat others. Pupils enjoy receiving stickers and certificates for good behaviour and for working hard. Many pupils behave properly because they want to; they know that it is the right thing to do. Out on the playground, play is sometimes lively but good relationships prevail and break times remain friendly. Teachers discuss any incidents fully with pupils and this helps them to be aware of the impact of their actions on others and ensures that pupils are treated fairly. The way that pupils concentrate and show a lively interest in what they are learning, and their very good behaviour contribute well to the high standards the school attains.

**The headteacher is building an effective staff team; together they are bringing about change for the better.**

16. In the last 18 months, the headteacher, with the very good support of the deputy headteacher, has put in place arrangements to check how well the pupils and the school are doing. This has brought about a strong commitment from the staff and governors to improve and move forward and there is now a clear view of where the school is and where it is heading. This better direction has come about through the school's more effective use of information about test results and also through improvements to teaching that are speeding up pupils' learning. Some of this work is in the early stages and the full extent of its success is not yet realised because there has not been time to measure the success of the action.
17. The difference in the standards between St Mary's and similar schools showed a discrepancy in English and science compared with those of mathematics. The headteacher and deputy

headteacher quickly set about identifying the reason why and concentrated their efforts upon the standards in the English. It was clear that it was due to the boys' performance in writing. The action taken to redress the imbalance between the boys' and girls' performance in writing, and to raise standards in English generally, is beginning to work. This is particularly noticeable in the pupils' knowledge and understanding of punctuation, grammar and handwriting but not in the use of these skills to promote writing in other subjects, which the headteacher identified in the analysis of pupils' work in October 2001. Nevertheless, these findings and the action taken are giving staff and governors something to aim for that is based upon effective self-review and firm evidence.

18. There has been good improvement since the last inspection especially in pupils' behaviour. The staff use the whole school approach to dealing with instances of inappropriate behaviour effectively. Pupils feel they are treated fairly and there is now a friendly and hard-working atmosphere in the school. Parents are rightly pleased with the improvements there have been and say their children are happy and eager to come to school.
19. Staff welcome the chances they have had to improve their teaching skills; training has been focused well upon giving practical guidance and teachers have visited schools to see good practice in action. Structure has been given by providing key targets for each year group to develop writing and to ensure that pupils build effectively on what has been learned before. The staff now have a good framework to work to, their confidence has increased and this showed in the quality of teaching during the inspection. This is giving impetus to the effective changes taking place in the school, which are evident in the effective teaching of the basic skills of reading and writing.
20. The headteacher keeps the governors informed and they have developed a better understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement in the last 18 months. Their involvement in setting the headteacher targets for improvement in her management of the school gives them insight to the unique features of managing change to bring about improvements. They are developing a much more probing and questioning approach to their work, mainly as a result of the better information they now receive.
21. The headteacher has a clear vision for St Mary's; this is shared effectively with all staff and governors and they all know and feel they have an important part to play. This is a prime component of the effective staff and pupil relationships and is bringing about improvement successfully.

## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

### **Teachers do not plan enough chances for pupils to use and extend their writing skills.**

22. Whilst the teaching of the basic skills of writing are now more effective than they were and pupils are gaining a good grounding in:

- recognising the different uses of punctuation;
- how to structure their writing; and
- how to write for different reasons,

there are not enough chances for pupils to use what they have learned when they write in other subjects. This results in the pupils not practising, for example, how to change the style of their writing and vary the structure of their sentences. This is particularly noticeable in the junior classes although the higher attaining pupils in Year 2 also have too limited opportunities to use, for example, their good understanding of punctuation and the range of lively words they know to develop their imaginative writing further.

23. Chances to write are sometimes lessened by the use of worksheets in subjects such as history and geography. Pupils have used skills learned in literacy, such as note taking, to gather information about life in the past. Because the pupils do not use these notes to write their own accounts, how well they have understood the work is not clear and also the purpose of note taking as a way of remembering key facts for later use is not reinforced. In some subjects, teachers require pupils to read and complete exercises filling in missing words. These types of exercises are a satisfactory way of sharing information but it is quite a time consuming exercise when pupils then copy the writing out. This is not the best use of time and does not give pupils the chance to express what they have read in their own words.

24. Where chances are given for pupils to write their own accounts, the work is often of good quality, showing pupils have a good grasp not only of, for example, the historical background of the work, but also in using the skills learned in literacy to structure and punctuate their work correctly. Their writing is often lively in these instances and they can sustain their ideas, for example, when writing the diary of a Spanish sailor at the time of the Armada. The pupils capture the initial excitement as the galleons set sail and then the fear, as the realisation of what might be in store becomes apparent. Opportunities like this are the exception rather than the rule, although in Year 6 there is a greater demand upon pupils to write up their science investigations in their own words. Most pupils, but in particular the higher attaining pupils, show that they can work independently, are self-motivated and, given the chance, could express themselves effectively in writing.

25. Older pupils are sometimes given 'reading for understanding' activities and exercises where the teacher dictates a piece of text to help them practise their punctuation and spelling skills. Chances to link these types of activities to other subjects are not always capitalised upon to:

- develop knowledge and understanding in other subjects; and
- practise literacy skills in meaningful and purposeful ways, for example note taking.

26. Much has been done in a short time to bring about improvements in English. The pupils now have the skills, knowledge and understanding to use their writing more effectively throughout the curriculum.

### **Pupils do not always know how to improve their work because teachers' marking does not give sufficient guidance.**

27. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but there are very few instances when the marking gives pupils pointers to help them improve their work. Where teachers make comments, they often tend to be praiseworthy rather than summarising what the pupil has been successful with, what they need to think about to do even better next time, or if further reinforcement is needed. The pupils enjoy being praised but many, from Year 2 onwards, are capable of reading and acting

upon the guidance of teachers. Where marking is not as effective as it could be, pupils are already doing a task well but repeating similar work at a later stage. This is because marking should be an important way for the teacher to check pupils' strengths and where they need to improve. This helps teachers prepare work that always places the right level of demand upon the pupils. For example, some higher attaining pupils in Year 2 were competently explaining the different types of punctuation in the text they were reading. Earlier work showed that they already used lively and interesting words in their writing, yet the independent writing they were asked to do required them to think up a list of alternative words for words such as 'good' or 'bad' and to use them to rewrite part of the story. More precise and evaluative marking could have led to these pupils being asked to use speech marks in their story or perhaps to rewrite the ending with the wolf escaping, thus challenging the pupils to do even more than they did last time they wrote a story and so take their learning on at an even quicker pace.

28. All teachers explain to pupils what they are going to learn; pupils like this because it sets their work within a context. These are broad headings for the whole class to aim for. Also some teachers in the older classes give individual pupils short-term targets to strive for and this improves the rate at which these pupils learn and helps them to take responsibility and have a good understanding of how well they are doing. However, this is not a regular feature throughout the classes, nor are the targets recorded in a systematic way so that a check can be made of:

- how long the pupil has had the target;
- what sort of progress they are making.

This work is an important aspect of tracking pupils' progress. Older pupils do not have a strong enough awareness of what they can do to improve. In addition, with marking, it provides others working with the pupils, including parents, with a very good idea of how they can help pupils to learn at a faster rate. The methods teachers use to check how individual pupils are doing do not always get to the heart of what the pupil can or cannot do.



## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

To raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should

- 1) Extend and improve the range of opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects by:
  - improving teachers' planning to ensure that relevant and purposeful links are made to other subjects that require pupils to make use of their writing skills;
  - avoiding activities that require pupils to copy or provide short written answers thus ensuring that the work is set at the right level of demand and so challenges pupils.
  
- 2) Improve the involvement of pupils in their own learning, the quality of teachers' marking and the systems for setting targets for individual pupils by:
  - ensuring that written comments provide information for pupils about how they could do better next time;
  - ensuring that teachers use a consistent and accurate method for setting targets for pupils' learning.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

10

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

6

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	2	5	3	0	0	0
Percentage	0	20	50	30	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than nine percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

YR – Y6

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	130
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

YR – Y6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	16

#### English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0
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#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.6
National comparative data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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 2)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	6	12	18

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	16	17	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 [82]	94 [82]	100 [88]
	National	84 [83]	86 [84]	91 [90]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	16	18	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 [82]	100 [88]	100 [88]
	National	85 [84]	89 [88]	89 [88]

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	10	9	19

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	17	16	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	89 [87]	84 [87]	95 [87]
	National	75 [75]	71 [72]	87 [85]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	18	18	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	95 [100]	95 [100]	95 [100]
	National	72 [70]	74 [72]	82 [79]

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

\* Because fewer than ten boys and fewer than ten girls took the tests in 2001, the numbers at each level are omitted from the tables in line with the governors reporting arrangements to parents.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	125
Any other minority ethnic group	1

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19:1
Average class size	25

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	52

***FTE means full-time equivalent.***

### ***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.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	270114
Total expenditure	254599
Expenditure per pupil	1990
Balance brought forward from previous year	29644
Balance carried forward to next year	45159*

*\*This is a higher than recommended carry forward brought about through savings due to staffing vacancies. The governors have suitable plans to reduce the funds, which includes maintaining the organisation of seven classes during the mornings for the teaching of literacy and numeracy and improvements to the fabric of the building.*

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.7
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

***FTE means full-time equivalent.***

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	130
Number of questionnaires returned	76

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	39	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	49	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	52	7	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	55	5	0	1
The teaching is good.	49	50	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	55	13	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	36	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	50	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	32	58	9	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	54	38	1	1	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	51	3	5	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	50	7	4	3