

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST MARY'S VOLUNTARY AIDED CATHOLIC
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Marple Bridge, Stockport

LEA area: Stockport

Unique reference number: 106123

Headteacher: Mrs Eileen Brady

Reporting inspector: Mr John G F Parsons
22546

Dates of inspection: 31 October –1 November 2000

Inspection number: 225287

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Lowry Drive
Marple Bridge
Stockport
Cheshire

Postcode: SK6 5BR

Telephone number: 0161 427 7498

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr John Glennon

Date of previous inspection: 14 April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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|--------------------------|----------------------|
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is a voluntary aided Catholic primary school. It is situated on a pleasant hilly site and the building has been recently upgraded and increased in size to improve the accommodation. There are 216 boys and girls on roll, including the nursery, and the school is larger than it was at the time of the last inspection. It is about the same size as other primary schools. The percentage of pupils on the register of special educational needs, 20 per cent, is broadly in line with the national average. The number of pupils who have statements of special educational needs, 1 per cent, is below average. A very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is low, 4 per cent, and is similar to the last inspection. The attainment of many pupils is above that expected for their age on entry. However, the school has widened its catchment and the intake has changed. There are now more pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and standards on entry are lower overall than at the time of the last inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St. Mary's is a very good school, which achieves high standards, especially in the national tests when pupils reach 11 years. The excellent leadership of the headteacher, helped by key staff, has improved teaching and learning. The school has been very well supported by the governing body. This has enabled the school to maintain and improve standards since the last inspection. The very strong Catholic framework of high principles and values ensures pupils have a very good work ethic. Across the school, there are very high quality relationships between adults and pupils. These, together with the very good standards of behaviour and pupils' very good attitudes, underpin the school's success. The school offers very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school provides a very strong Catholic framework of high principles and values for its pupils. The excellent leadership of the headteacher supported by key staff has led to a very good improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. The governing body has provided very good support to the school. Consequently, standards have risen. Very high quality monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance underpin this improvement.
- The development of high quality assessment and planning has contributed to the very good quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, pupils of all abilities progress very well.
- There are very high quality relationships between staff, pupils and parents. The school has a commitment to pupils' personal development. This ensures very good standards of behaviour and very good attitudes to school, which are conducive to very good learning.
- The school's provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. The school is a very strong community. It gives pupils real responsibility and opportunities to mature and show initiative. Parents fully appreciate the commitment of all those involved in the work of the school. They have very high expectations of the school's performance.

What could be improved

- In comparison with other very high quality key skills developed across the curriculum, such as literacy and numeracy, the school does not develop the key skill of information and communication technology to a similarly high standard.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop greater awareness of the cultural diversity within their own locality.

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 very good improvement since the last inspection. The school was last inspected in April 1997. It has fully addressed the two key issues in the last report. There are very effective schemes of work, which take into account pupils' skills development and ensure pupils learn well. Co-ordinators have a full management role including monitoring teaching and learning. Standards have been maintained and improved. In the last three years there has been a focus on writing and development of language skills through the National Literacy Strategy. This has raised standards at both key stages. The range and quality of pupils' writing have significantly improved, as illustrated in the 2000 results in the national tests at Key Stage 2. The number of pupils who achieved the higher Level 5¹ has markedly increased in English and science. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has improved standards and the pace of teaching and learning in mathematics. The school has implemented a curriculum that develops pupils' skills in science, history and geography. It has adopted the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's Curriculum 2000 initiative, which gives teachers guidelines on the rest of the curriculum. There has been increased emphasis on investigative work in science. This has had a positive impact on the standards achieved in the national tests for pupils aged 11 years. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. This is as a result of effective monitoring, in-service training including literacy and numeracy and the appointment of well qualified and experienced teaching staff. In particular, the whole-school monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has led to an improvement in their quality. This is illustrated by the improvement in standards by the end of Key Stage 2, over five years, which exceeds the national trend. Analysis and tracking of pupils' progress individually has led to improved planning of work for pupils of all abilities and has been very effective at raising standards overall.

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 | |
| | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2000 | |
| English | A | A | A | A | very high A* |
| Mathematics | B | A* | A | A | well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E |
| Science | A | A | A | B | |

By the age of 11 pupils make very good progress. In the 2000 national tests, see above, their standards were well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Standards were well above similar schools in English and mathematics and above in science. This follows a pattern of high achievement over five years. Of particular note is that 47 per cent of pupils in English, 33 per cent in mathematics and 64 per cent in science achieved the higher Level 5. In mathematics 3 per cent of pupils gained the very high Level 6 score. Pupils are achieving well and these high scores indicate very strong progress overall, including gifted and talented pupils. The inspection confirms these standards and found that reading, speaking and listening and mathematics were particularly high. Writing skills are strong and improving due to the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. The specific work with higher attaining pupils in 'booster' classes² is very effective. The school has exceeded its challenging targets this year in English and mathematics. Of those who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire, 93 per cent of parents consider their children make good or very good progress. Pupils on the register of special educational needs achieve well in relation to their age and ability and make very good progress. Standards in information and communication technology are in line with those expected for pupils' age across the school. The school has planned development in this key skill, but presently standards in information and communication technology are not as advanced as other key skills such as literacy and numeracy.

¹ By the end of Key Stage 2 the national expectation for pupils is Level 4. Level 5 and Level 6 are above and well above expectation.

² Booster classes give more advanced extension work for higher attaining or gifted and talented pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Attitudes to the school | A strength of the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are very interested in their work, are enthusiastic participants in lessons and assemblies and listen closely to what teachers say. Very strong Catholic principles and values are evident in pupils' attitudes and their approach to school life. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | A strength of the school. Behaviour in and around the school is very good. In their questionnaire all parents agreed that pupils' behaviour is good. The school has been complimented on pupils' behaviour when they go on trips or visits. |
| Personal development and relationships | A strength of the school. Pupils take real responsibility in the school including fund-raising, which they organise totally. They act as road safety officers and look after the school office at lunch-time. They take responsibility for their own behaviour and consider its effect on others. Pupils are fully included in school development. Older pupils take responsibility for younger ones as part of their prefect duties. The relationship between all adults and pupils is very strong and makes a significant contribution to raising standards. |
| Attendance | Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and arrive promptly at the start of the day. Attendance is well above the national average |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | aged up to 5 years | aged 5-7 years | Aged 7-11 years |
|----------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Lessons seen overall | Very good | Very good | Very 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.

Teaching is very good overall. During the inspection, 32 per cent of teaching observed was very good and 50 per cent was good. Teaching was never less than satisfactory. Teachers track the progress of individual pupils. They use this very detailed assessment of pupils' progress to ensure that work is carefully planned. This ensures planning meets the needs of all pupils. Using this knowledge of pupils' attainment, teachers group them at an early stage of the year. This grouping of pupils makes teaching more effective as the teacher knows the attainment levels of each group. The school has been careful to develop teaching of basic skills over a significant period and this is evident in English, mathematics and science lessons. Particularly good is the way in which teachers manage their pupils. They build on the very strong relationships that they have established. They use a very good variety of methods including home-made resources to keep lessons interesting. Homework is effectively used to promote pupils' learning. This results in the rapid acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding especially in literacy and numeracy. At Key Stage 2 pupils show high levels of awareness of their own learning and intellectual effort. The brisk pace of most lessons leads to very good productivity and rapid learning. The interesting teaching in many lessons accounts for pupils' very high levels of concentration. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language benefit from well-focused support and work is very effectively pitched to their needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Very good. There is very good provision for the Foundation Stage (children under five). The school has worked hard to develop a comprehensive and effective curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Very good. This is a strength of the school, due to the thorough assessment of pupils, the high quality of teaching and the effective use of support staff. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | Very good. There are very few pupils with English as an additional language, but they are fully integrated with their peers and the individual tracking of pupils ensures that their needs are fully met. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Very good. Pupils' spiritual development is good. Their moral and social development is very good. Pupils are constantly asked to reflect on the effect of their behaviour on others, in line with the school's very strong Catholic principles. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Very good. The individual tracking of pupils' development ensures that the school is aware of pupils' needs at all times. Procedures for child protection are good. |

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Excellent. The dynamic leadership by the headteacher is supported by key staff who ensure the school's values are reflected in all its work. All have a clear vision for the school, which gives the school purposeful direction and makes it very effective. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Very good. The chair of governors and the governing body are well informed and work closely with the headteacher to shape the direction of the school. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Very good. The school is acutely aware of its strengths and weaknesses and acts upon them. |
| The strategic use of resources | Very good. The school makes very efficient use of all resources. It effectively uses the principles of best value to ensure efficient use of funding. |

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Forty-four per cent of parents returned the questionnaire and 17 per cent attended the pre-inspection meeting.

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and they make good progress. • Teaching is good and the school is well led and managed. • The school has high expectations and helps their children become mature and responsible. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework is not enough. • The school working more closely with parents. • The range of extra-curricular activities. |

Inspectors support the positive views of parents. They found that the homework provision was effective and promoted pupils' learning. They also consider the links with parents to be good. Extensive building work temporarily affected the extra-curricular provision, as it was considered unsafe to use the grounds while work was in progress. Inspectors found the extra-curricular provision good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school provides a very strong Catholic framework of high principles and values for its pupils. The excellent leadership of the headteacher supported by key staff has led to a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. The governing body has provided very good support to the school. Consequently, standards have risen. Very high quality monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance underpin this improvement.

1. The school has made significant progress since the last inspection. It works within a very strong Catholic framework of principles and values. An important principle stated by the school is: *'our philosophy emphasises the worth of the individual and the need to develop every child to his or her full potential in all areas of learning'*. This philosophy is apparent in all the work of the school. The school takes particular care to assess pupils' progress and adults pay attention to pupils' well-being.
2. The governing body and headteacher have actively and successfully sought to improve the quality of teaching in a number of ways. For example, they have strengthened the staff by employing teachers who accord with the high expectations of teamwork and are keen to develop professionally.
3. The communication systems developed by the school, such as daily briefings of teachers and support staff, are very effective. The staff and curriculum meetings have improved the teamwork within the school, which is very strong. Improved communications have also developed the consistency of teaching and learning, as teachers are fully aware of the expectations of the school.
4. The school development plan is an effective and well-constructed document, which guides the school. The process of developing it by involving the whole staff and governing body has been effective in welding together a formidable team. The school development plan indicates targeted in-service training in many subjects. It includes training in literacy and numeracy. This focused in-service training is another factor in the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection.
5. Standards for children under five are good. They are articulate and offer descriptions confidently when exploring materials, using words like *milky*, *wet*, *sticky* and *goeey*. They show independence when taking their aprons on and off. In the reception class children know and can recall the five senses. They talk about them and understand the concepts of *hard* and *soft*. They identify various fruits whilst blindfolded such as apple, orange and banana. Pupils count to eight accurately and are developing the vocabulary of mathematics *'by adding one'*. Children are well on the way to achieving the early learning goals³.
6. Standards in the 2000 national tests for pupils aged seven were disappointing for the school and are regarded as a legacy of the unsatisfactory teaching in the past which the school identified and remedied. In reading and writing, standards were in line, in mathematics they were below and in science they were above national averages. Compared with similar schools, standards in reading and writing were below, in

³ Early learning goals - these are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the #Foundation #Stage. They mainly refer to achievements children make in connection with: communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; and physical and creative development.

mathematics they were well below and in science they were in line with national averages. These results are not typical and, taking the four years from 1996 to 1999 for pupils aged seven, standards exceeded the national average in all the tested subjects. The inspection found that standards have improved significantly and are at least in line with the national average for similar schools as a result of the careful monitoring of standards and improved teaching at Key Stage 1.

7. Standards in the 2000 national tests for pupils aged 11 were well above average in English, mathematics and science. Standards were well above similar schools in English and mathematics and above in science. The school has maintained and developed standards over a five-year period in all subjects tested nationally at the end of Key Stage 2. Particularly impressive is the high percentage of pupils gaining the high Level 5 scores - 47 per cent in English, 33 per cent in mathematics and 64 per cent in science. In mathematics 3 per cent of pupils gained the very high Level 6 score. This is an indicator that gifted and talented pupils are achieving well.
8. In a Year 1 literacy lesson, pupils enjoyed the poem of the '*old lady who swallowed a fly*'. The majority of the class had memorised the poem. Pupils were attentive and responsive. They identified rhyming words such as *pan* and *man*. They wrote out all the words in the poem containing the sound '*at*' in a zigzag book provided by the teacher. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, pupils understood that sequenced instructions are necessary in a recipe, for example. They wrote out or stuck sentences on to a sheet in order, to show how to make a glass of commercial fruit juice. In discussing handwriting, one pupil knew the difference between diagonal, horizontal and vertical lines.
9. Year 1 pupils count numbers to 20 accurately and the more advanced pupils write the numbers as figures and words. In one lesson they estimated the number of stars displayed and counted and recorded their answers. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils worked on fractions; all pupils recognised halves, quarters and thirds. They also understood that some shapes are symmetrical, when halved or quartered, and some are not. Good discussion took place between pupils on this. In a Year 2 science lesson, pupils effectively sorted out and named naturally occurring objects and materials.
10. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are above average in English. In a Year 3 literacy lesson, pupils correctly identified verbs in simple sentences and understood the use of verbs and speech marks. They had a good knowledge of the conventions of book and story writing. Pupils read with expression. In a Year 4 lesson, pupils successfully transposed narrative into dialogue and created adverbs from adjectives. Speaking and listening skills were well developed and higher attainers correctly identified indirect speech. All pupils worked conscientiously and with purpose. Year 6 pupils know the difference between an autobiography and a biography. During one lesson, pupils read fluently and with expression from Roald Dahl's autobiography *Boy*. They discussed the complex sentences used and how they can be reorganised. Pupils understood that word order in a complex sentence was important if its meaning was to be clear.
11. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils understood words such as *vertical*, *horizontal* and *parallel*. A higher attaining pupil knew and understood the word *vertices* and used it in discussion. The majority of pupils understand the difference between two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes. In one lesson a good discussion took place on the properties of *equilateral*, *isosceles* and *scalene* triangles that effectively reinforced the majority of pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. In a Year 4 science lesson, pupils made the link between the words *humerus* and *humorous* and

talked about the *funny bone* while studying the various bones in the body. Pupils in this lesson understood that the ribcage protects the vital organs and the way in which joints enable the body to move so efficiently.

12. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve appropriately and make very good progress. Close monitoring and tracking of all pupils' development, together with effective support, enables this.
13. A feature of all the good teaching was the close monitoring of standards in the classroom through careful questioning of the pupils to ensure they understood the objectives of the lesson. Another factor is the frequent visits by the headteacher who comes into lessons and works alongside pupils checking the effectiveness of the lesson. This helps the teacher monitor his or her own performance through informal feedback. These visits are obviously an everyday occurrence as neither the pupils nor the teachers react to them, other than to be enthusiastic about the headteacher's input. Another feature in lessons is the very strong work ethic which pupils show. They are keen to learn and have very good attitudes to the school and their work.

The development of high quality assessment and planning has contributed to the very good quality of teaching and learning. Pupils of all abilities progress very well.

14. Teaching is very good overall. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Very good teaching was seen in 32 per cent and good teaching in 50 per cent of lessons. Although the quality of teaching in this inspection is based on a smaller sample, it is much better than in the previous inspection. In that inspection 4.5 per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory and 9 per cent was very good or better. All parents in their pre-inspection questionnaires consider that the teaching is good. In their meeting parents agreed that, *'teachers give 101 per cent'*. Several factors common to good and very good teaching are apparent in lessons. It is clear that the very detailed assessment of what pupils have achieved enables teachers to set challenging but achievable targets for the future. This ensures the pitch of work set is always appropriate. This close individual tracking enables teachers to group pupils at an early stage, when they change classes. It means that pupils are challenged and extended early in the year. This leads to high productivity and standards at the start of each year. The pupils' high quantity and quality of work analysed during the inspection illustrates this. Another particular feature of lessons is the very strong relationship between pupils and their teacher. This leads to respect, a strong work ethic and a very effective working environment.
15. Another reason why teaching is so successful is the variety of teaching methods that teachers use to keep lessons interesting. Teachers use their own home-made teaching aids such as laminated flash cards and illustrations. An overhead projector was used during a presentation in science. It effectively enabled the teacher to explain the use of a key on a map, a good link with geography. This key was used to identify plants and animals during a nature walk. Teachers are careful to make sure pupils understand the intended learning outcome of the lesson. Very often teachers explain in one or two sentences what is expected in the lesson. They write this on a board to make sure it is clear to all pupils. This helps the teacher to determine whether or not the objectives of the lesson have been achieved. The teacher identifies what pupils have learned so that the next lesson can be planned accordingly. For example, in one Year 3 science lesson the teacher asked pupils to write down their ideas about light, as part of an assessment exercise. Pupils are then asked to write their ideas again at the end of the topic to see what they have learned. In this lesson, pupils showed very good self-discipline. They worked quietly

while others were carrying out experiments with torches. Pupils waited their turn patiently and showed great maturity and courtesy to each other.

16. It is clear that many of the pupils have high expectations of themselves as do their parents. The school has a reputation for high achievement, which encourages parents to send their children there. The teachers also have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is reflected in the high standards in the national tests, especially at Key Stage 2. Teachers have high and clear expectations of what their pupils can achieve in a given time. They set work for them that is achievable but challenging in a given period of time. This leads to a brisk pace in lessons. Higher attaining or gifted and talented pupils extend their range of work in class. Sometimes they are withdrawn to work separately in *booster* groups. These have proved very effective. It is particularly noticeable that pupils at Key Stage 2 have high levels of awareness of their own learning and intellectual effort. They discuss sensibly with their peers how they are getting on with a particular topic. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils talked about the use of a learning grid given to them to solve a multi-faceted problem. During their discussion they determined how useful it was and learned how to use it at the same time. Pupils with special educational needs or who have English as an additional language are effectively supported in small groups. They are withdrawn as necessary. The individual tracking procedures used to evaluate pupils' progress means the teacher knows their level of achievement at all times.
17. Lessons start promptly and at a good pace. This keeps pupils interested and involved. Frequently teachers set deadlines for the completion of a task, '*you have 15 minutes to finish this*'. This maintains the brisk pace of the lesson and injects a sense of urgency into pupils' learning. It also sustains their concentration. Classroom support staff are used very well to help assess pupils' learning and support the teaching. Teachers have a very good understanding of how pupils learn best. There are well-established assessment procedures. The individual tracking of pupils ensures that work is exactly tailored to pupils' needs with the right degree of challenge. Pupil management is a strength of the teaching. It is very unobtrusive and not one lesson was seen where pupils' inappropriate behaviour intruded on the effectiveness of the lesson.
18. There is almost a corporate style in the teaching at the school. This consistency of approach is due to the close and effective monitoring of teaching. There is a culture within the school where teachers act as a critical friend to each other. Subject co-ordinators and the senior management team evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. Monitoring is well established and has a strong impact on the quality of teaching. This, together with the extensive range of in-service training, including literacy and numeracy, has developed teacher expertise significantly. High quality displays around the school extend pupils' learning.

There are very high quality relationships between staff, pupils and parents. The school has a commitment to pupils' personal development. This ensures very good standards of behaviour and very good attitudes to school, which are conducive to very good learning.

19. The school is justifiably proud that that it fosters close relationships between home and school. As one parent says, '*the individual sessions the children have in the run up to their first full day is a wonderful idea, it has certainly helped my daughter accept full-time school much more easily*'. The school rightly judges its success in providing a happy, safe, but challenging, environment by the high attendance and low unauthorised absence. Another indicator is that the pupils are self-disciplined and

co-operative. The school has consciously developed procedures and techniques, including structured lunch-times, for building pupils' self-esteem. It is clear that all adults make a real effort to praise pupils' endeavours and make them feel good about themselves. This in turn develops the very good relationships in the school, making everything a positive experience. This positive atmosphere enables pupils to make mistakes and learn from them in a supportive and non-threatening way.

20. Pupils have very high standards of behaviour. This is because they believe in themselves regardless of their ability and do their best at all times. It was very noticeable in lessons that pupils try hard and listen attentively to the teacher. This was because the teacher does the same and respects the pupils' point of view. Frequently teachers will say, *'what do you think?'*
21. Professional development for teachers provides the expertise for developing pupils and their learning. Suitably targeted in-service training is provided for teachers to improve their skills. The school provides its own in-service training using the senior management team and the co-ordinators in English, mathematics and science. This has included effective training in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies over recent years. Staff meetings are held to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum. The school identifies target groups of pupils. Additional teaching and classroom assistant time is allocated to them in order to monitor and more closely focus their learning. The school carefully creates a classroom environment that is conducive to successful learning. The school involves parents closely in their children's learning through parent consultations, curriculum information evenings, homework, regular newsletters, open days and questionnaires.

The school's provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. The school is a very strong community. It gives pupils real responsibility and opportunities to mature and show initiative. Parents fully appreciate the commitment of all those involved in the work of the school. They have very high expectations of the school's performance.

22. Pupils have good opportunities for spiritual development. They are constantly asked to reflect on the effect their behaviour has on others, in line with the school's very strong Catholic principles. For example, in one Year 1 lesson when pupils were reading a poem they discussed amongst themselves, *'what must the old lady have felt like when she swallowed a fly?'* Teachers often ask pupils to reflect in lessons on how someone in a story would feel. Moral development is very good. A very strong moral code is in evidence throughout the school and in the very good school policy on behaviour. Pupils show considerable self-control. For example, in a science lesson, pupils happily waited their turn to use a torch while experimenting with light. They treated each other courteously and with patience. This is also a good example of pupils' very good moral development. They have a good sense of right and wrong. In some lessons pupils discuss whether specific behaviour is acceptable or not. Relationships between pupils are very good as are those between pupils and adults. These relationships are developed through good extra-curricular provision and residential visits and the school has been complimented on pupils' behaviour during them.
23. The pre-inspection questionnaire completed by parents shows 96 per cent of parents consider the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. There are very strong Catholic principles and values, which underpin the high levels of care and support that every individual, whether child or adult, gives to each other. One parent says, *the school is superb in terms of discipline and fostering a caring environment'*. Another says that, *'I have found the teachers with whom I have*

contact have been very kind and attentive towards the children's needs and feelings. They are very, very caring, ensuring the children feel comfortable with the teacher and the school as a whole'. The very good relationships between adults and children are a major strength of the school. St Mary's has high expectations of itself as a community. This includes the personal development of its pupils, their self-esteem and levels of independence and responsibility. The school enjoys the unstinting support of the governors, staff and parents in its endeavours.

24. There is a very strong work ethic that is constantly reinforced at every occasion, during lessons, in assemblies, at lunch-time and even in the corridor. The headteacher will often give a short impromptu pep talk to raise morale and pupils' self-esteem. This not only positively raises pupils' morale but adult morale as well. The *buzz* in the school is infectious and even the inspectors were affected by it!
25. Pupils in Year 6 are very aware of the improvement in their work. They have a mature approach to their learning. The serious and high quality discussions they have with each other and the teacher are important factors in raising their standards. Pupils are given real and meaningful responsibility. Older pupils look after younger ones. Some older prefects look after the school office, when it is unmanned by an adult, at lunch-time. Pupils have even been involved in raising funds for the school. They designed their own flyers to advertise the event and raised funds with a minimum of supervision. It is apparent that pupils take responsibility for their own actions. They are constantly encouraged to consider the effect that their actions will have on others.
26. Constant praise and positive reinforcement are used to encourage pupils' endeavours. The frequently heard expressions are *'Wow! Isn't that great, well done'* and *'what a good idea, let's give him (or her) a clap'*. Even when pupils are criticised it is done in a positive way. This encourages pupils to try and not to be disappointed if they make mistakes as this helps the learning process. The form captains are voted in by their peers and all Year 6 pupils are prefects. They take their duties seriously and have an input into school affairs, even the design of a new playground area. All these factors go to make up this vibrant and purposeful community which is St Mary's.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

In comparison with other very high quality key skills developed across the curriculum, such as literacy and numeracy, the school does not develop the key skill of information and communication technology to a similarly high standard.

27. The school has planned the development of information and communication technology in its school development plan, including staff training. It was apparent during the inspection that the quality of teaching and learning and use of information and communication technology varies somewhat from class to class. To some extent it is dependent on how familiar and comfortable the teacher is with the technology. There were some opportunities during the inspection for pupils to word-process written work or use mathematics programs to develop numeracy skills. These were lessons in which teachers had good subject knowledge of information and communication technology.
28. It is clear that information and communication technology is not planned into some lessons where it could be useful. Opportunities are missed for pupils to reinforce their work in history and geography, for example by using CD-ROMs for research work. Many pupils have already developed competent computer keyboard skills at

home as well as at school. They use a mouse, load a disk and save word-processed text or pictures they have drawn. They show a satisfactory facility on the computer from an early age. Many know how to log on to the Internet. Pupils' standards are similar to those expected for their age, and sometimes above this. However, the school does not develop this key skill to the same extent as other key skills across the curriculum, for example literacy and numeracy, in which standards are very well developed.

There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop greater awareness of the cultural diversity within their own locality.

29. Marple Bridge, where the school is situated, is close to Manchester - a culturally diverse area. Marple Bridge and the school are not culturally diverse. The percentage of minority ethnic groups in the school and the surrounding area is very low. The school is aware of this. It gives some opportunities for pupils to experience other cultures through religious education and other religions, for example in celebrating *Diwali* and other festivals. In each classroom and in the library there is a collection of books which reflects the diverse cultural heritage of the nation. In addition, the library contains a small display about the multi-cultural nature of society. However, these have little impact on pupils and there is a general lack of awareness amongst them about the diversity of cultures which makes up this country.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

30. In order to build on the very good standards achieved by the school:
- the school should:
 - develop teachers' knowledge of information and communication technology to make them more effective;
 - ensure more planned opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology as an integral part of the day-to-day curriculum;
 - develop pupils' skills to a high standard, similar to those found in other subjects taught in the school; (paragraphs: 27 and 28)
 - the school should plan opportunities for pupils to explore their local community in order to:
 - gain a greater awareness of the impact of the cultural diversity of the Greater Manchester area. (paragraph: 29)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 22 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 36 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 0 | 32 | 50 | 18 | 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) | 20 | 216 |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | 0 | 6 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

| Special educational needs | Nursery | YR – Y6 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 0 | 2 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 2 | 42 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 3 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 20 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 20 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 3.9 |
| 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

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2000 | 12 | 14 | 26 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | Reading | Writing | Mathematics |
|---------------------------------------------|----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above | Boys | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| | Girls | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| | Total | 23 | 23 | 23 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above | School | 88 (87) | 88 (97) | 88 (90) |
| | National | 83 (82) | 84 (83) | 90 (87) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---------------------------------------------|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above | Boys | 10 | 12 | 12 |
| | Girls | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| | Total | 23 | 25 | 25 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above | School | 88 (97) | 96 (97) | 96 (97) |
| | National | 84 (82) | 88 (86) | 88 (87) |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2000 | 15 | 15 | 30 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---------------------------------------------|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above | Boys | 13 | 13 | 14 |
| | Girls | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| | Total | 28 | 28 | 29 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above | School | 93 (87) | 93 (87) | 97 (90) |
| | National | 75 (70) | 72 (69) | 85 (78) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---------------------------------------------|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above | Boys | 13 | 13 | 14 |
| | Girls | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| | Total | 28 | 28 | 29 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above | School | 93 (87) | 93 (87) | 97 (90) |
| | National | 70 (68) | 72 (69) | 79 (75) |

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

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 2 |
| Black – other | 1 |
| Indian | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 |
| White | 168 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 0 |

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 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 20:1 |
| Average class size | 24.5 |

Education support staff: YR – Y6

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|-------|
| Total number of education support staff | 7 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 181.5 |

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

| | |
|------------------------------------------|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 1 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 20:1 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|------|
| Total number of education support staff | 1 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 22.5 |

| | |
|--------------------------------|------|
| Number of pupils per FTE adult | 10:1 |
|--------------------------------|------|

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 1999-2000 |
|----------------|-----------|

| | £ |
|--------------------------------------------|----------|
| Total income | 419,487 |
| Total expenditure | 407,742 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 1,677.54 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | -8,805 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 2,940 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 43.5%

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 216 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 94 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 74 | 24 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 45 | 48 | 3 | 0 | 4 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 63 | 37 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 36 | 52 | 7 | 1 | 4 |
| The teaching is good. | 61 | 39 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 42 | 49 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 63 | 31 | 4 | 0 | 2 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 73 | 27 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 54 | 37 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 70 | 29 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 67 | 29 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 20 | 48 | 21 | 7 | 4 |

Other issues raised by parents

Parents expressed the view that the school is an orderly environment with Catholic values and principles. They consider the headteacher's leadership is outstanding and – *‘teachers give 101 per cent’*. They feel the school develops a superb balance of discipline and respect with their children.