



# St Mary's RC Infant School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 104817  
**LEA** St. Helens  
**Inspection number** 277227  
**Inspection dates** 18 January 2006 to 19 January 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mrs Anna Dawson CfBT Lead Inspector

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Victoria Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Newton-le-Willows
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 7		Merseyside WA12 9RX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 224 927
<b>Number on roll</b>	229	<b>Fax number</b>	01925 224 927
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs C Twist
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 November 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs C Ryding

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a larger than average Catholic infant school. It has a fully subscribed nursery class, which accommodates 50 children who attend either a morning or afternoon session. Most pupils come from social backgrounds that are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged. There are 14.8% of children entitled to free school meals, which is just below average. Pupils are from White British backgrounds and all speak English as a first language. Nearly 9% of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is below average but varies year on year. Most pupils enter the nursery with broadly average attainments. The school has achieved a Local Authority (LA) Quality Kite Mark for the Foundation Stage in 2001 and The Healthy Schools Award in 2005.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Mary's Catholic Infant School is a good school with some outstanding features. The aims of promoting good academic standards and the children's enjoyment within a Christian ethos are evident in practice. The inspection judgements agree with the school's written evaluation of its effectiveness as good in its self-evaluation. Nevertheless, it has been too modest in recording the majority of grades on aspects of provision as satisfactory rather than good. The school is well led and managed and benefits from good links with other schools. However, monitoring of teaching and learning is not sharp enough to further improve their quality. There is good provision in the Foundation Stage. By the end of Year 2 children attain above average standards in reading and mathematics and very high standards in writing. The quality of teaching and learning is good and consequently children make good progress in their learning overall and outstanding progress in writing. Assessment is satisfactory but overall procedures for setting targets are not yet sufficiently formalised to provide an effective overview of achievement. The school's commitment to promote equal opportunities for all its children is extremely good and all groups of children make equally as good progress as others. The curriculum is well planned in relation to the five Every Child Matters outcomes and the care of children is good. The children's awareness of a healthy lifestyle is outstanding. Children behave well, enjoy school and have good attitudes to learning. The parents are supportive but too many take their children on holiday during term time. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and there is good capacity for further improvement. The school provides good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- formalise the school's overall target setting procedures to provide an effective overview of children's achievement
- develop monitoring of teaching and learning with a sharper focus for improvement
- continue to improve procedures to raise attendance

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

In reading and mathematics children make good progress to attain above average standards. Writing is exceptionally strong and the children make outstanding progress and attain standards that are very high. From Reception to Year 2, children know, understand and act on the challenging targets set for them in writing and mathematics. When asked, one pupil said 'We know how to get better because we read what the teachers say'. The rate of children's progress has been maintained since the last inspection.

The children get off to a good start in the nursery and Reception classes. Most enter the nursery with broadly average attainments and skills. By the time they leave Reception, the majority have made good progress to attain the nationally expected

Early Learning Goals in all areas of learning. A significant minority exceed these goals and are working towards or at National Curriculum levels in English and mathematics. This good progress is consistently continued through school as children's knowledge and understanding of basic skills are systematically built on. In writing, children acquire skills systematically and comprehensively. They practice and develop their skills frequently in other subjects. Exceptionally good attention is paid to meeting the individual needs of all the children. No groups of pupils make progress that is less than good. Because of the well-organised teaching and help they receive, children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are the most able achieve equally well as others.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Children's personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes towards learning. They say, 'teachers make our lessons fun!' They develop an understanding of diversity of world cultures, respect for others, and the difference between right and wrong based on Christian principles. School rules are clear and the system of rewards motivates children well. Behaviour around school is good and children are extremely courteous and friendly towards visitors. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with effectively. Children respect their teachers, they want to please them, and understand that when they are at school, they learn individually and as part of a group or team. As a result they attain the skills required that will assist them in life. Attendance is below the national average and too many holidays are taken through term time. Some children make slow progress because of these holidays.

Teachers ensure that children work safely and healthy lifestyles are exceptionally well promoted. Healthy snacks available at break time and a good programme of sporting activities make valuable contributions to supporting healthy lifestyles. Children contribute well to school life and played an active part in developing the mission statement and anti-bullying policy. Older children take responsibility and develop their social skills and relationships well through, for example, being dinner monitors and taking part in school and community events.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good overall and at times outstanding. For example, in writing, where the school has invested time and energy in promoting pupils' skills, lessons are stimulating and challenging and as a result children make outstanding progress. In these lessons teaching is planned thoroughly and tightly structured to match the needs of the children, which especially helps those who need the most encouragement and support. An imaginative variety of approaches such as visits; drama

and role-play activities promote children's creative thinking and inspires them to write at a challenging pace. In less effective lessons there are fewer opportunities for children to make a contribution and the pace of work is slower.

Progress overall is good due to the high expectations teachers have of their children. Good teaching in the Foundation Stage through interesting, well-planned practical activities helps children make good progress. Assessment overall is satisfactory. Good use is made of individual targets set for pupils in English and mathematics to help them improve. The school is beginning to make good moves to establish a strong process for tracking children's progress, but have yet to formalise procedures to set longer-term targets based on children's predicted potential to give a clearer overview of their achievement. All teachers have positive relationships with their class and use praise well; this ensures good standards of behaviour and a harmonious atmosphere. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively supported by well-deployed teaching assistants and as a result make good progress and are fully included in what the school has to offer. The staff encourage good attitudes to learning. These are strong features that characterise the school.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum meets children's interests and needs. In the nursery and Reception classes there is a good balance of activities between those taught by the staff and those children choose themselves. Good opportunities are planned for outdoor activities, although there is a lack of opportunity and equipment to promote constructive play at Key Stage 1 playtimes. There is great emphasis throughout school on children developing personal and social and basic skills. Provision of the role-play areas such as the hospital or the police station promote children's speaking and social skills very well and builds their self-confidence. A good range of visits to the local area and visitors into school enrich the curriculum. Visits to such places as Blackpool's Sea Life Centre not only extend their thinking skills but also motivate children to write about their experiences. African drummers, an Indian dancer and a themed multi-cultural week help the children to begin to appreciate the diverse nature of society and add to their enjoyment in learning.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. Positive relationships between children and adults ensure that children feel safe and that there is someone they would turn to if they needed help. However, some children in Years 1 and 2, express concern about playtimes and described them as 'a bit scary'. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by effective individual education plans. Policies on child protection are thorough and procedures secure. First aid and risk assessment procedures are good. There is a strong caring ethos, which is evident in all aspects of the school's work, for example providing the 'Kerbcraft' programme of road safety. Well-trained teaching assistants provide good support for children with learning difficulties and/or

disabilities. Children are clear about what teachers require of them to improve their learning further. The induction procedures for children entering school and transferring to junior school are good.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of leadership and management is good. The leadership of the headteacher is good. The vision to promote good academic standards and an enriched and enjoyable curriculum within a Christian ethos is shared by the staff. Together they have created a happy learning environment where children thrive. The headteacher and staff have identified the main strengths and weaknesses of the school well. The school self-evaluation report accords with the inspectors' judgements of good. However some aspects of the school's work have been modestly awarded the numerical grade equivalent to satisfactory. The school realises, in retrospect, that its restraint in the grading of these aspects understates the school's provision. The school meets the needs of the children and the parents and is fully inclusive. Views from the children, staff, parents and governors are gathered and taken into account. The subject leaders carry out their responsibilities well and receive good professional development. There are good systems in place to check on how well the school is doing and to identify where further improvements can be made. The monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher and subject leaders and the improvement of procedures for assessment are recognised within the school improvement plan for further development. Appropriate action is taken by the governors to deter parents from taking holidays in term time but at present has met with limited success. Otherwise parents are very supportive. They comment positively about the school. For example, one parent wrote 'My child would like to attend seven days a week given a chance'. The financial resources are managed well to meet the priorities of the school. The governing body give a clear steer to the work of the school and since the last inspection have made successful bids to improve the accommodation.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

As you know, two inspectors recently visited your school to find out how well your teachers are helping you to learn and to enjoy school. Thank you for being so polite and talking to the inspectors.

The things we like best about your school.

- You write exceptionally well.
- The way the school cares for you all equally well.
- The way you understand how important it is to be healthy and stay safe.
- You enjoy school and learning new things.

The things we have asked your teachers to improve.

- We would like teachers to write down your learning targets in more detail.
- We would like teachers to keep a better check on how well you are learning.
- We would like your parents not to take you on holiday in term time so you do not miss school.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection. We hope you will continue to enjoy learning at St Mary's. Most of all, we hope that you will help your teachers to make the school even better.