



St Mary's CofE Junior and Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105495
LEA Manchester
Inspection number 277364
Inspection dates 13 March 2006 to 14 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Colin Smith CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Adcombe Street
School category	Voluntary controlled		Alexandra Park
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Moss Side, Manchester M16 7AQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 2261773
Number on roll	220	Fax number	0161 2261174
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr R Palmer
Date of previous inspection	13 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr Barry Chalmers

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's C of E is an average sized primary school that serves a very deprived and rapidly changing inner city community. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals is four times the national average. The percentage of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is twice the national average. The majority of children are Black British African and Black British/African Caribbean heritage. However, there are ten different nationalities in all. Increasing numbers of children from Somalia are entering school. Many families moving into the area have refugee or asylum-seeker status and their children have not attended school or have had only part time education in other European countries. Over half of the children in school are at an early stage of learning English and fourteen different languages are spoken. The movement of families into and out of the area is extremely high. This is reflected in the very high mobility in school. Only half of the children attending have remained in the school for more than two years and only 30 % of the Year 6 children in 2005 had started in Reception. On the whole, children enter school with very low attainment for their age.

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 is a vibrant school that provides a good standard of education and good value for money. Children in the Foundation Stage make a very good start because teaching is outstanding. Although standards are very low compared to national averages by Year 6, children who have remained in the school for two years or more make good progress overall, particularly in mathematics and reading. However, children's writing and problem solving skills require further improvement. Staff have a very accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They judge correctly that good provision is made in all aspects of the school's work. They also recognise that more needs to be done to improve the behaviour of a small minority of children at lunchtime. Children's good personal development and well-being is attributable to the good curriculum and the good level of care, guidance and support provided. Excellent links with outside agencies ensure that all children are safeguarded and well supported, particularly the most vulnerable ones. Parents and children know that their cultural differences are highly prized, respected and nurtured. They rightly see this as a school where all children are included and every child matters. Significant improvements have been made since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning and leadership and management are now good. The desire to raise achievement and standards, in the most challenging of circumstances, is firmly embedded in all of the school's work, illustrating its good capacity for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching and learning further to raise achievement in writing.
- Ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to apply and improve their skills in solving mathematical problems.
- Ensure that all children behave well at lunchtime.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well overall. Nursery and Reception children achieve very well. Despite the very low starting point, two-thirds of them reach the learning goals expected by the end of the Reception year. The very high turnover of children entering and leaving school distorts the picture of standards and masks genuine improvements in achievement. When all children are considered, progress appears to be significantly lower than expected. However, the progress made by children who have remained in the school for two years or more is good in both reading and mathematics. Progress in writing is satisfactory but there are weaknesses in fluency, punctuation and handwriting. The school's assessment results in 2004 were broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 and below average in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2. In 2005, results fell to significantly low levels in both key stages, largely because half of the children in Years 2 and 6 had changed by the time the tests were taken. In the current Years 2 and 6, mobility is not as great and standards

are very similar to where they were in 2004. Each year challenging targets are set but they are sometimes missed because of an influx of new children. On the whole the achievement of more able children, boys, children with learning difficulties and those at an early stage of learning English is good. The progress of girls and children of African Caribbean heritage children is satisfactory. Children's basic calculation and reading skills are secure but their writing and problem solving skills are not at the same level.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development and well-being is good. Children and parents are very positive about the school. Children enjoy lessons and learn eagerly in an atmosphere of trust and purposeful achievement. Most children take pride in their work and in the school. The school has received national recognition for its success in shaping children's social and learning responses. Consequently children's attitudes and behaviour are good overall and often exemplary in lessons. However, there are instances of misbehaviour at lunchtime, which the school council is determined to improve. Charity work, drama and school council activities contribute significantly to children's sense of community. The current focus on developing children's vocational skills, such as learning what it is like to work in a hotel, makes an outstanding contribution to their future economic well-being. These experiences are also raising aspirations of what can be achieved. Children feel safe from bullying and most have a good appreciation of healthy lifestyles. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because their backgrounds, beliefs and diverse cultures are highly valued and shared. Attendance is below the national average. However, when account is taken of absence through religious holidays and mobility because of the time taken for children to appear on other school's registers, attendance is satisfactory. Exclusions are rare and used only in exceptional circumstances.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers manage children's behaviour and learning well. The positive learning atmosphere in all classes encourages children to give of their best. Teachers explain new learning clearly and ensure that children understand what they are expected to learn. Assessment is good. Teachers use the information well to cater for children's very diverse needs. Very good organisation and high quality support from additional specialist teachers and classroom assistants ensures that children with learning difficulties, additional language needs and the more able ones learn successfully. Outstanding teaching in the nursery and Reception classes is reflected in children's interest, self-confidence and high motivation to learn. In Year 2, teaching is excellent because the pace of lessons is matched precisely to children's different rates of learning. The use of questioning significantly improves children's

reasoning, speaking and listening skills. For example, in discussing fair tests in a Year 4 science lesson, one child commented, 'Don't push the car down the slope, use gravity.' The few weaknesses in teaching relate to writing. In some lessons too much time is spent completing exercises. This results in insufficient time for children to apply and improve their skills by learning to write creatively and accurately, at length.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers a good curriculum that meets national requirements and is sensitively adapted to cater for children's very diverse needs. The 'Yoruba' and 'My Manchester' projects provide excellent opportunities for children to study their own cultures and changes within their community. Children with learning difficulties, at an early stage of learning English and the able children benefit from activities well matched to their levels of understanding. Children's enjoyment of school is captured by the delight on the faces of the nursery children as they organise their baby clinic. Children greatly appreciate the additional sporting and musical activities, educational visits and using the computer suite. However, they would appreciate more opportunities to develop their artistic talents. To this end, the school is planning for more creativity. Opportunities for problem solving are presently insufficient. The strong thread of personal and health education ensures that children develop a good understanding of personal safety and healthy lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The level of care, guidance and support provided is good and often exemplary in lessons. Consequently children feel safe and confident in knowing that there are trusted adults on hand to confide in. Children's academic progress and their social development are monitored scrupulously. The outcomes are shared and clear targets for improvement are agreed. Consequently children know how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve. Child protection, health and safety routines and risk assessments are very secure and effective. The school has established excellent links with outside agencies, which ensures that the many vulnerable children are safeguarded and strongly supported. Parents greatly appreciate the efforts made to make the school a safe haven for their children, although some parents have concerns about lunchtime supervision. Preparing children for their entry into the nursery and their transition to high school are very strong features of the school's work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good at all levels. The clear direction and support provided are successful in raising achievement and enhancing children's personal development. Senior staff have been innovative in measuring school performance. Since many children do not remain in the school for more than two years, children's

learning is assessed very carefully over short periods. The results are analysed thoroughly by senior managers to determine the progress made by all of the different ethnic and ability groups. The information is used very effectively to provide support programmes for children with language and learning difficulties. However, teachers themselves are not as involved in the process as much as they could be. The school's effective self-evaluation identifies very specific priorities. These are clearly expressed in the school improvement plan and supported by prudent financial management. A good example is the training provided for teaching assistants to become family outreach workers. This is proving immensely beneficial in raising family aspirations, safeguarding children at risk and building exceptionally good links with external agencies. Much energy has been directed towards improving teaching and learning, particularly through observing lessons and sharing good practice. This is evident in the work of the two recently appointed teachers who are already adapting their lessons well to match children's diverse learning needs. In addition, the strong thrust in involving parents in their children's learning is paying dividends. More parents are helping at home and working in school. Governors are very involved and effective in holding the school to account.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	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

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	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	2	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

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2	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

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. We enjoyed our visit and would like you to know what we found out. The things we particularly liked were:

- the way senior staff lead the school and try to improve it
- the good teaching that helps you to learn
- the way staff take care of you and help you
- the good behaviour and the interest that you show in lessons.
- the way you are trying to achieve your targets for improvement

We have asked your headteacher and staff to make your school even better by increasing your achievement in writing, improving your problem solving skills in mathematics and ensuring that everyone behaves well at lunchtime. We think they can best do this by:

- helping you to enjoy writing more so that you learn to write interesting stories and accounts, using correct English
- teaching you how to improve your understanding of mathematics by using your skills to investigate and solve problems
- working with the school council in checking and improving lunchtime behaviour.