



Ince St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106447
LEA Wigan
Inspection number 277563
Inspection dates 26 June 2006 to 27 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr George Crowther CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Derby Street
School category	Voluntary controlled		Spring View
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Wigan, Lancashire WN3 4TJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01942 866416
Number on roll	164	Fax number	01942 864772
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Cllr C Garnsey
Date of previous inspection	8 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Helen Garnsey

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's is a smaller than average sized primary school that serves an area of considerable social disadvantage. Children's attainment when they start school is well below that expected for their age. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much higher than for most schools. Almost all the children are from White British backgrounds. A few are from minority ethnic heritages, but none is at the early stages of learning English.

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 good school. The headteacher's vision and leadership have created a very positive environment for learning. Often from low starting points, children do well to reach standards by Year 6 that are usually broadly average. Over recent years, however, progress during Key Stage 2 has varied from good to unsatisfactory. Some causes of slower progress, such as staff changes, have been unavoidable, but a few weaker aspects of teaching and learning have not been tackled as effectively as they could have been. Children of all abilities and from all backgrounds make the same progress.

Children's personal development is good. They have very positive attitudes to learning and they behave well. The quality of teaching is good, overall. Most lessons are interesting and challenging. Children are encouraged to enjoy their learning, and teachers have high expectations of achievement. In some lessons, however, the pace of learning is too slow and children do not make as much progress as they could. The curriculum is good, well-planned and meets the diversity of children's needs effectively. Good provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that children make a confidence, productive start at school.

Leadership is good, with high aspirations for the children and a strong sense of community. Weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been effectively tackled. However management is satisfactory because the success of actions to improve children's progress could sometimes be evaluated more rigorously to ensure that they have made a difference. The school has a largely accurate picture of its own effectiveness, but in some areas, judges itself to be better than it is. This is because procedures for evaluating strengths and weaknesses are not always sharp enough. It has good capacity to improve further because the staff are a cohesive team who work hard to provide the best for the children. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Evaluate its work more critically so that weaknesses are identified and tackled. Where action is taken, ensure its impact is measured rigorously.
- Ensure that the good progress children make in the Reception class and Key Stage 1 is sustained consistently during Key Stage 2.
- In Key Stage 2, increase the proportion of lessons where the quality of teaching and learning is good or better.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When they start school, many children have weak basic skills. Progress in the Reception class is good. The staff help the children to become confident learners and provide a good range of interesting activities. By the time children join Year 1, however, standards are still low. During Key Stage 1, good progress continues because teachers ensure

that the work helps the children to take the next step in their learning. Nonetheless, by the end of Year 2, standards are still below average. In Key Stage 2, over recent years, progress has varied between good and unsatisfactory. For example, in 2005, Year 6 did particularly well to reach broadly average standards, and to meet the challenging targets set for them. Standards in the current Year 6 are lower. Progress varies because some year groups have a greater proportion of children who find learning difficult, and staff changes have had an adverse effect in some classes. Bearing in mind their starting points, children generally achieve well by the time they leave the school. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress because they get good support from teachers and teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Most children are very positive about school. They say, 'We like all the different lessons because there's lots of interesting things to do.' This explains why they are keen to learn. Some of the oldest children, however, can be difficult to motivate. Everyone is enthusiastic about the good range of activities outside lessons. Good behaviour supports children's learning well. Relationships are very positive. As one child said, 'Everyone gets on well together in our school.' Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A rich range of experiences, such as the link with a village in Kenya, develops children's understanding of themselves and their place in the wider world. Attendance has improved over that last few years and is now average.

Children develop a good understanding of their own well-being. They know how to make healthy choices in the food they eat and the exercise they take. One child said, 'Lots of water keeps you hydrated and helps you think.' Children feel safe at school because they know they can ask the staff for help. They have good opportunities to express their views, and they say the staff help to put ideas into action, such as improving activities at playtime. Special responsibilities for the older children, such as being a play leader or reading with younger ones, give them an understanding of contributing to the community. Children take part in a variety of work-related activities, which helps to prepare them for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Where teaching is good, very positive relationships help teachers to manage and organise learning successfully. Tasks are matched well to children's needs. The best teaching really motivates the children, as seen when Year 5 children were finding out about persuasive writing. Good support for learning from teachers and teaching assistants helps children to do their best. In a few lessons at Key Stage 2, however, teaching is sometimes less strong. In

these lessons, the pace of learning is slower and teachers spend too much time working with the whole class and, as a result, some children lose motivation and learn less.

Good systems for assessing children's attainment and tracking their progress help the school to identify areas for improvement. For example, the school placed greater emphasis on problem solving in mathematics because it was a weak aspect of children's skills. Teachers use assessment information well to ensure that the tasks they give children are appropriately challenging. Careful assessment of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the setting of precise learning targets, help them to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A well-planned range of interesting activities gives the Reception children a good start to school and develops their confidence and skills. This is built upon rigorously through Key Stage 1 by emphasizing basic skills and fun activities. Experiences that improve the skills children need to support all their learning are a growing feature of the curriculum. For example, in Key Stage 2, children learn to generate questions, negotiate ways to find answers and complete enterprises, such as making pizzas to sell. The school is planning more work that combines subjects, develops key skills steadily and makes learning exciting.

The curriculum raises children's awareness of the choices open to them in life, of citizenship, and of the factors that help to keep them healthy and safe. Fun outdoor physical exercise, and the provision of fruit, water and milk all contribute to this awareness. The school makes good use of its links with other schools, so that specialist arts and science provision strengthen the curriculum. Both parents and children value the exciting range of visits, visitors, and extra-curricular activities that enrich learning opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Levels of care are very good. The staff's highest priority is to ensure that each child is cared for, happy and ready to learn. As the children said, 'If you feel sad or you're stuck on your work, a teacher will help you.' Very good relationships with outside agencies safeguard the welfare of vulnerable or disadvantaged children. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are cared for, and well supported in their learning, often by effective teaching assistants. Arrangements for dealing with child protection issues and any health and safety risks are good, and well understood by the staff.

The school has a comprehensive system for tracking children's progress over time and for providing support where catch-up is needed. However, this information has not been used effectively enough by all teachers to ensure consistently good progress during Key Stage 2. Marking of work is satisfactory. The best gives children clear messages about how to improve their work, but practice is inconsistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, but not as strong as the school's evaluation. There are undoubted strengths in the headteacher's leadership. She is passionate about the school, and wants all the children and staff to do well. This creates a very positive climate, which ensures that children feel confident to learn and are much valued as individuals. Since the last inspection, action to raise children's achievement has paid dividends in some respects. For example, much valuable work has been done to improve children's speaking and listening skills. The most important, recent weakness, however, has been children's progress during Key Stage 2, which has varied from good to unsatisfactory. Whilst the school has identified, and done its best to deal with some of the reasons for these fluctuations, it has not tackled rigorously enough the weaker aspects of teaching that sometimes lead to slower progress by children. The school has pursued some wide-ranging initiatives to raise standards, but it is not rigorous enough at evaluating their impact. This leaves uncertainty about success and does not help the school to plan the next steps.

Good leadership of the Foundation Stage ensures that children make a good start to school. Productive links with outside agencies support children and their families. Parents think the school does a good job and that their views are heeded. Governors are diligent, committed, and support the school's day-to-day work well, but they do not yet play a full enough part in checking on the school's performance. The school's record of overcoming barriers to learning, which children bring with them to school, underpins its capacity to improve further.

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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?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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	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	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	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	3	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

We visited your school last week to find out how well you are doing with your work.

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for being so helpful when we asked you questions. We enjoyed finding out about the things you like doing.

We think there are lots of good things about your school, but we also discovered some ways in which we think your learning could be even better. The things we particularly like are:

- Your school is a very happy place where everyone gets on well together.
- In most lessons, you are keen to do your best and you enjoy learning.
- You are making good progress in most of the work you do.
- We particularly like the way the older children help the younger ones.
- Most of the lessons we saw had interesting things to do, which helped you to learn.
- You really enjoy all the sporting and musical activities outside lessons.
- You are well behaved and very friendly towards visitors.
- There are lots of extra activities, such as the Mad Bad Hair Day, which you really enjoy.
- You have a good understanding about being healthy and staying safe.
- The link you have with a village in Kenya is very interesting.

We would like you to work with your teachers to improve the way you learn.

- When your teachers try something new to help you learn better, we want them to find out if it's been really successful, so they know it's the best thing to do.
- Some of the children in Years 3 to 6 are not making as much progress as they could.

We have asked your teachers to make sure everyone does well.

- In some of the lessons in Years 3 to 6, the teachers are not making sure you work hard all the time. We have asked them to speed up your learning, and you will have to help.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. Please share this letter with the other children. We both hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make St Mary's a good place to be.