



# St Mary's RC Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 105953  
**Local Authority** Salford  
**Inspection number** 287376  
**Inspection date** 4 December 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Brenda McIntosh

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

|   |                    |                         |                    |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Primary            | <b>School address</b>   | Hemming Drive      |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Voluntary aided    |                         | Eccles             |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 3-11               |                         | Manchester M30 0FJ |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed              | <b>Telephone number</b> | 0161 7894532       |
| <b>Number on roll (school)</b>            | 225                | <b>Fax number</b>       | 0161 7894532       |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body | <b>Chair</b>            | Rev Fr R Livesey   |
|   |                    | <b>Headteacher</b>      | Mrs Eilish Peliza  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 25 June 2001       |                         |                    |

|                          |   |                                    |
|--------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

St Mary's is an average sized school situated close to Eccles town centre. It is a popular choice with parents and the number of pupils on roll varies very little from year to year. The majority of pupils live in the vicinity of the school and come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. Almost all are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities but the number with a statement of special educational need is above average.

The school has recently achieved the Healthy Schools Award and is a Creative Partnership lead school.

## **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 with some outstanding features. It is innovative in the way it continually strives for improvement and exceedingly successful in helping pupils make outstanding gains in their personal development and well-being. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive in their views about the school: they feel it is a friendly, happy school where children are helped to face new challenges and develop great self-confidence.

The school's success stems from the very clear direction the headteacher sets for improving the school. There is a strong team spirit among staff and governors and all play their part in moving the school forward and creating enthusiastic learners. The school meets its aim to provide a welcoming, friendly, bright and lively happy place where children feel secure. This promotes pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Pupils are eager to learn and take on board new ideas quickly. They are polite and well mannered and their behaviour is exemplary. They feel safe in school and are confident that their teachers will help them if they have a problem.

Children enter Nursery with standards below those typically expected for their age. They get off to an excellent start in the Foundation Stage because the teaching is lively and imaginative and captures children's natural curiosity very effectively. Teachers develop children's independence and early reading and writing skills exceptionally well. In Years 1 to 6 pupils build on this firm foundation and make good progress to reach standards that are usually above average. Pupils' achievement is good overall. Progress is best in reading and science because more pupils attain the higher levels expected of them in these two subjects. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good throughout the school. Teachers make lessons interesting and through skilful and imaginative use of the interactive whiteboards take learning on at a good pace. Pupils know what they are expected to learn and how to improve their work. Rigorous tracking of pupils' progress in writing and very effective use of individual targets are really helping to raise achievement and improve standards across all abilities, including the most able. Teachers give good attention to problem solving and investigative work in mathematics to challenge the more able pupils but progress is not yet tracked with the same level of rigour as in writing to ensure that all pupils are on track to meet their targets.

The curriculum is outstanding. The involvement in the Creative Partnerships initiative helps the school to deliver a very rich arts-based curriculum and opens up exciting opportunities for pupils to learn through the use of professional artists, visits and visitors. It supports the Every Child Matters agenda exceptionally well in all aspects. The strong focus on learning through creativity is seen in pupils' enthusiastic response to the very diverse projects on offer to them. The links made between subjects are highly imaginative and bring a relevance and excitement to learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used extensively and creatively across all subjects in a very impressive way. Pupils' animations, produced as part of a project, resulted in the school being nominated for an award in the Bradford Film Festival. Through

such projects pupils have excellent opportunities to develop a wide range of ICT skills and see the benefits of modern technology in everyday life.

Self-evaluation is a rigorous process through which the school identifies its strengths and what it could do better. A strength in the good leadership and management is how decisive and systematic action is taken to secure improvements. In doing this the school makes excellent use of its own good practice and draws effectively upon various outside expertise when necessary. For example, the successful developments in the approach to the teaching of writing are seen in the rising standards throughout school and pupils' increased motivation to write. When a group of Year 2 boys was asked if they liked writing, one answered with great delight, 'I love it', others quickly agreed and were clearly proud of their efforts.

Improvement since the last inspection is good and the school is well placed to improve further the good quality education it offers. It provides good value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Use assessment information rigorously to improve achievement and raise standards in mathematics, and in particular for the more able pupils at the end of Key Stage 2.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

In recent years by the end of Reception standards have been average in all areas of learning, representing good achievement from below average standards on entry to Nursery. The increased emphasis on the teaching of phonics is now resulting in children making exceptionally good progress in the development of their writing and early reading skills and standards are rising. Pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 is good. At this stage standards are also rising steadily each year and are now above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In Years 3 to 6 pupils make good progress and achieve well from their starting points: standards are usually above average. An exception was in 2006 when standards were broadly average because too few pupils attained the higher levels expected of them in writing and mathematics. The school is tackling this and inspection evidence shows that standards are rising at a good pace in writing. The attention to motivating boys into writing creatively is proving particularly successful. Progress in mathematics is not yet quite as good because developments are more recent. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language also make good progress because they are given extra help to meet their needs.

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

### **Grade: 1**

A high level of respect leads to excellent relationships throughout school. Pupils greatly enjoy school, as reflected in their above average attendance, and take great pleasure

in all the school offers. Right from an early age children in Nursery develop very good social skills: they behave impeccably at lunchtime and are developing very good table manners and eating habits. Children in Reception gain very good self-confidence and quickly become independent learners. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is outstanding so that by Year 6, pupils are confident, mature young people and are exceptionally well prepared for their future lives both socially and academically. Through the Creative Partnerships pupils gain numerous opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community. Pupils take on a whole range of responsible roles, interact with visitors from a range of cultures and backgrounds and respond very well to charitable causes in the community and worldwide. The school choir and brass band regularly perform at venues in the community. This gives pupils a great sense of pride, and pleasure to those attending. Pupils demonstrate their good appreciation of the need for safety and healthy lifestyles by choosing healthy food, and many pupils eagerly join in the Fitbod activities at lunchtime. Year 6 pupils run the Totally Tasty Fruit Trolley that sells healthy snacks and set up a business plan to ensure that the enterprise is profitable. Funds raised are spent wisely on helping to improve various aspects of the school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good and enables pupils to learn securely and at a good pace throughout the school. Lessons are planned effectively to meet pupils' different levels of ability and varied learning styles. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language learn as well as others in the class because of the extra support they receive. Teaching assistants are well briefed so they have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and consequently they support pupils' learning effectively. Relationships are strong and form the basis of pupils' good progress in lessons: pupils find learning fun because they can have a laugh and a joke with their teachers but still work hard. Marking of pupils' work is good; comments are particularly helpful in guiding pupils' learning in writing. Information from assessment is not yet used with the same rigour in mathematics as it is in writing to fully impact on pupils' learning. Homework is used effectively to extend pupils' learning in the classroom. Parents requested a mathematics workshop last year so they can give the correct advice when supporting their children's learning at home.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

Creative Partnerships enables the school to provide a high quality curriculum that is considerably enriched by a diverse range of learning experiences. Pupils enjoy learning through interacting with poets and artists and produce work of high quality. Writing and ICT are used creatively across the curriculum; imaginative links are planned across subjects to make learning enjoyable and inspiring. Pupils become animated when

talking about their projects, such as designing and making robots, filming and editing or using PowerPoint as a creative tool. In addition, there is a wide range of enrichment activities in and out of school: this includes learning to speak French, music, sport and residential visits. All pupils in Year 4 are learning to play a stringed instrument through a Wider Opportunities Project; through this pupils gain confidence in performing in public and a chance to play alongside musicians from other schools. The programme for personal, social and health education and citizenship is very well planned and contributes effectively to pupils' personal development and well-being. In the Foundation Stage activities are imaginatively planned to develop children's confidence and independence, preparing them very well for Year 1.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils agree that 'St Mary's is a good place to learn', because they say 'People are kind and caring and everyone helps each other.' They feel well cared for and that they can always confide in an adult or friend if they have any problems. Younger pupils find the Friendship Squad helpful if they have any worries on the playground. Child protection procedures and those for safeguarding pupils are in place and meet current requirements. Health and safety arrangements are well considered and detailed records are kept. Pupils' individual needs are quickly identified and help and guidance is provided to ensure that they progress at a good rate. Procedures for checking on pupils' progress are good overall. Pupils have a good awareness of their targets and have good opportunities in class to assess their own understanding. Writing targets are prominent in class and pupils make good use of them to help them improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher provides very good leadership and has a clear focus on raising standards. Since her appointment in 2003 she has worked effectively with the senior management team to secure improvements in several areas, for example, raising standards in writing and ICT and developing a system to track pupils' progress throughout school. Governors too play their part and are effective in providing challenge and support in shaping the school's direction. Self-evaluation is embedded well and priorities are systematically addressed. For example, the action taken to tackle standards in writing is working effectively, so the school is aware that it now needs to give full attention to its work in mathematics. There is a strong team spirit where everyone's contribution is valued. The professional development of all staff is closely linked to staff's own development and raising standards. The school draws upon an excellent range of expertise through various partnerships to improve its provision and enhance pupils' learning experiences.

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## Inspection judgements

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | <b>School Overall</b> |
|---|-----------------------|

### 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   |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | 1   |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage  | 1   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | 2   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes |

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 2 |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 1 |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 2 |

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

## Leadership and management

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 2   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2   |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets   | 2   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 2   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 2   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 2   |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?  | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures?   | No  |
| Does this school require a notice to improve?  | No  |

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

It was a real pleasure to visit your school recently and I thank you for giving me such a warm welcome. I had a very busy but enjoyable day and very much appreciated the chance to have lunch with the councillors and to talk with some of you about what it is like to be a pupil at St Mary's. I would like to share with you some of the things I found out. I think that St Mary's is a good school with some things that are outstanding. Here are some of my reasons.

Some of you told me about the exciting projects you have the chance to be involved in and how teachers make learning interesting and fun by making connections between subjects. I have to agree that teachers do make learning interesting and the curriculum at St Mary's is a bit special; the opportunities you have to work with professional artists and poets on various projects through the Creative Partnerships are tremendous. The work you produce is of high quality. The way you are developing your ICT skills is preparing you exceptionally well for the next steps in your education and future adult life. It was good to see you all engrossed in your work when I visited your classes: your behaviour in lessons and around school is exemplary. It is good to see you all getting on so well together. I like the way you take part in the great range of activities the school provides for you and how you are helped to keep fit and healthy. Year 4 pupils are doing really well in learning to play stringed instruments; it is a great opportunity.

The headteacher and all the other staff look after you well and are constantly looking for ways to make things even better for you. Recently your standards in writing have been improving, and I was impressed by your enthusiasm for writing and how you use your targets to improve your work. To help you improve your work further in mathematics I have asked the school to check your progress very carefully and make sure you all reach the targets you are capable of. I hope you continue to enjoy your learning and keep on working hard.

My very best wishes for the future.