

St Mary and St Paul's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104453
Local Authority	Knowsley
Inspection number	308605
Inspection date	12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Janette Corlett

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	145
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev John Taylor
Headteacher	Mr Neil Dixon
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Bryer Road Prescot Merseyside L35 5DN
Telephone number	0151 4266869
Fax number	0151 4308266

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; care, guidance and support; and teaching and learning. Evidence was gathered from: the school's self-evaluation; national published assessment data; the school's own assessment records and policies; observations of the school at work; discussions with staff and pupils; parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but there is no evidence to suggest that the school's own evaluations were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school is situated in an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. Well over half of the pupils are eligible to receive free school meals, which is very high compared with the national picture. Children's attainment levels on entry to the Nursery are generally very low. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low but is increasing. The number of pupils entering and leaving the school at other than the usual times is in line with the national average, but the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is significantly above that found nationally. The school holds Training School status and is the Lead School in the Greater Merseyside Consortium.

The school holds a variety of awards, including:

- National Healthy Schools Award
- Sports Activemark
- Artsmark Silver
- International Schools Award - Foundation Level
- Eco-School Silver Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Mary and St Paul's is an outstanding school. In a calm and nurturing learning environment, enhanced by stimulating displays, pupils quickly settle into the school's well established routines. Parents speak highly of the school. They say, 'It has come on in leaps and bounds over the last few years', and are very pleased with their children's progress. There is a culture of high expectations, and the care, guidance and support offered to pupils is excellent. As a result, pupils make exceptional progress in their personal development.

The great majority of pupils make outstanding progress academically. Well qualified teaching assistants and the learning mentor effectively support individuals, small groups of pupils and their families. This results in confident learners who thoroughly enjoy coming to school and achieve very well. The standards reached by the school fluctuate from year to year. Nevertheless, standards are consistently in line with the national average at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics and are above it in science. The school identified that pupils were not making enough progress in Years 1 and 2. The strategies put in place to improve this have been highly effective, and the pupils in these year groups are now making very good progress, particularly in reading and writing. More able pupils throughout the school have responded well to challenging tasks and activities and this is reflected in the improved quality of their written work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress based on their individual starting points.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They demonstrate a very good degree of mutual support and understanding. No pupils are left out of playtime activities, and a strong buddy system encourages older pupils to look after the younger ones. There is very little bullying and very few racist incidents occur because pupils have learned to treat one another in the way in which they would like to be treated. All adults have high expectations of good manners and behaviour. Their kind and courteous approach means that pupils respond with good behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning. A real strength of the school is the way in which pupils learn to take responsibility for their own actions. They know that the choice between right and wrong is not always easy, but that the choice is always theirs to make. This supports them in developing a mature approach to their future adult lives. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy, both within and outside the school. They contribute to the local and worldwide community in a number of ways and talk confidently about the school's role in improving things. For example, pupils take part in raising funds for a partner school in Africa and enjoy joining in with activities run by a local environmental group where they learn how they can make a positive contribution to their home area. Good international links ensure pupils' awareness of social and cultural diversity, and they particularly appreciate opportunities to sample food and learn about traditional festivals and religious celebrations.

Pupils love coming to school where they feel safe, have great trust in their teachers and take pride in their achievements. Attendance rates are satisfactory, owing to a mixture of outside factors affecting the welfare of a small number of pupils and their families. The school does everything it can to promote good attendance, and the great majority of pupils are rarely absent because school is so much fun!

Teachers establish very good relationships with pupils and manage their classes very well. The working atmosphere is relaxed and purposeful. Teaching and support staff have an excellent

understanding of pupils' changing needs and adapt their approaches in class accordingly to maintain the pace of progress. Their questioning skills are outstanding and challenge learners of all ability levels to develop their thinking and confidently contribute to class discussions. Teachers use assessment and marking well to ensure that work is well matched to individual and group needs and that pupils know what they need to do next to improve. However, pupils are not always given sufficient time to correct or improve their work in response to teachers' written comments, and this means that the impact of teachers' suggestions for improvement is weakened. The school has a wealth of data on pupils' progress. It analyses this well to identify where additional help or challenge are needed, and to support planning for school improvement.

The curriculum is enriched and enhanced by a very wide range of additional activities, both within school and through out-of-school clubs. Provision for science is outstanding and leads to exceptional progress because the school places so much emphasis on 'hands-on' investigation and interesting experiments with a real purpose. Excellent whole-school planning ensures that a wide range of teaching strategies is built into the curriculum to suit pupils' different needs. For instance, teachers use practical and visual learning to motivate pupils and add to their enjoyment. Similarly, the school makes very good use of interesting and exciting visits and visitors to expand pupils' knowledge and experience of the world. Good provision for physical education promotes health and fitness and encourages pupils to develop their skills and participate in local events. Pupils learn French and enjoy taking part in a wide range of creative activities in music and the arts. The school has worked hard to ensure effective links between different subjects, and this has supported the rapid improvements in pupils' writing. Information and communication technology is used widely and supports pupils in developing good skills for their future in education and as adults in the workforce.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher is a strong leader who ensures that the school continually evaluates and improves its provision for pupils. He is ably supported by enthusiastic school leaders, and by a committed and positive staff team. The school regularly seeks and acts on the views of parents and pupils, and works effectively with a wide range of partners both within and outside the local community. The governing body is well informed about the school and challenges school leaders on curriculum areas and pupils' progress. The school's combination of support for pupils and ambition for their future makes a real difference to their chances in life. It provides excellent value for money and has an outstanding capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The effect of provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. On entry to Nursery, many children have exceptionally low levels of skill and experience, particularly in relation to speech and language. They make good progress in most areas and outstanding progress in their language, social and physical development. This pattern of good progress continues in the Reception class, with the result that by the end of the Foundation Stage most pupils have skills which are only just below those levels expected for their age. First-rate leadership and management ensure that activities are exceptionally well planned. Moreover, play areas indoors and outside are so well established that children very quickly become independent learners. This is demonstrated by the way they help to tidy up after activities and set the tables for snack time. Children play happily together in a safe and stimulating environment. In the nursery they gain in knowledge and understanding of the world and a real sense of the wonder of nature through watching chicks hatch and looking after the young birds. The gentle way in which they

handle the chicks is amazing for children of such a young age. This shows the skill of teachers and support staff in helping children care for themselves and others, and in teaching them to treat animals with great respect.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils are given time in lessons to correct or improve their written work in line with teachers' comments in marking.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you all for giving me such a warm welcome to your school. You were all exceptionally polite and helpful, and I really enjoyed talking to you and finding out about all the fun you have in school. Thank you, especially to those of you who gave up your lunch break to explain how well you care for one another and know how to be safe and healthy.

Your school is outstanding. That means that it is one of the best in the country and you are right to be so proud of it! You make very good progress in your lessons and behave well. I was particularly impressed with the way you understand that each one of you is responsible for choosing between right and wrong and show great respect for the feelings of others. Your teachers work very hard to make learning exciting and interesting. You told me how much you enjoy the visits they arrange, and that they are all friendly and kind. You also said that they are always willing to give you extra support if you find things difficult, and that no one ever feels bad about having to ask for help. This has helped you to improve your writing - I was amazed at the amount you do and your obvious enthusiasm for this subject. During my visit I was lucky enough to meet the new arrivals in the nursery - Henrietta's chicks! No doubt Henrietta will be very pleased to receive all your letters telling her how well they are doing and how carefully you are looking after them for her. Further up the school, I saw lots of good examples of scientific investigations. I really hope many of you will be able to build on your skills and use them to continue your good work on improving our environment in the future.

In such a good school it was hard to think of ways in which things could be better, but I have asked your teachers to give you a little more time in lessons to look back at your work and improve it using their helpful comments and advice. You can help them by listening to their suggestions and paying careful attention to their comments on your written work. Each one of you has a very special contribution to make in the future. Your headteacher and all the adults in the school recognise this and will help you to be the very best that you can be.