

St Mary's CofE Primary School

Moston

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105545
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	308884
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Wainwright

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	241
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Joyce Roberts
Headteacher	Mrs Maureen Curley
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	St Mary's Road Moston Manchester Lancashire M40 0DF

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2008
Inspection number	308884

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's is an inner-city school in Moston, Manchester, surrounded on three sides by fields. It is an average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils live in local authority housing. The area is in the highest category nationally for social deprivation and also for pupils entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritage is above the national average, while the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to the national average. Only a very small proportion of pupils are currently at an early stage of learning English. The school holds Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. Day care is provided on the same site as the school and managed by a private provider. This is subject to a different inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school where good care is taken of pupils and standards, although broadly average, show signs of improvement. One pupil, reflecting the views of others states, 'The worst thing about school is when you can't come!' Pupils feel safe and well cared for. Many parents' comments also support this view of the school. The caring atmosphere and the strong community spirit in school help to provide a good basis for pupils' good personal development. Relationships between pupils and adults are good and pupils respond well to any learning opportunities. There are strong links with the local community through the church and the school has developed good links with outside agencies and neighbouring schools. Pupils new to the school, whether in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) or from overseas, are made to feel welcome and extra effective support is provided for those who need it.

Children's achievement during the EYFS from entry to the Nursery is satisfactory for the most part and in some aspects it is good. Children make satisfactory progress through the EYFS overall and develop sufficient confidence so that transition into Key Stage 1 is smooth. This satisfactory progress is maintained through Key Stage 1 and pupils attain standards that are broadly average except in writing which is a weaker element. Standards achieved by Key Stage 2 pupils in English and mathematics have fluctuated in recent years, but evidence shows an improvement overall from the previous year. Pupils attain broadly average standards overall by the time they leave school. Even so, some pupils, particularly the more able, could do better and pupils' writing is still not as good as it should be. There are no great differences between the performance of boys and girls. The school is aware of the need to raise standards, especially in writing, and is using various strategies that are beginning to have a positive impact on achievement. Problems with attendance and behaviour, which have existed in the past, have been handled effectively so that attendance is now improving and behaviour is good and often very good. This impacts positively on the learning of all and in lessons pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good even on occasions when lessons could be livelier and better matched to pupils' ability. This is a reflection of the respect they have for their teachers. The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory. There is some good teaching with the pace and enthusiasm of the teacher reflected in the progress made by pupils, but this is variable from satisfactory to good. The care, support and guidance of pupils are good. Provision has been made to support pupils who need additional help in lessons. This works well when these assistants work with small groups both in and outside classes. Pupils' work is marked conscientiously and guidance is given as to how well each pupil is progressing in learning for the most part. This helps pupils to identify what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum makes good provision for additional enhancement. A high percentage of pupils participate in the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Awards have been gained for encouraging healthy lifestyles through diet and physical activity. The attention paid to working alongside parents in order to improve attendance is succeeding. Similarly, the work of the coordinator for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is reflected in their achievement and good improvement in behaviour. There is a satisfactory curriculum with an increasing awareness by the staff of how to match it more closely to pupils' specific needs. The school is beginning to match the curriculum more to the specific needs of its pupils and to increase links between different subjects to make the curriculum more meaningful and relevant for pupils. However, the full impact of these initiatives is not yet evident.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. A highly regarded headteacher is building supporting teams who are clearly of one mind as to how they want the school to improve. Teamwork of all staff is good. The impact of the work of the management and the staff is yet to be fully realised. The improvements seen, in particular the use the school is now making of information gleaned from the tracking of pupils' progress to set challenging targets, indicate a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Leaders and managers are well supported by a governing body. However, governors need to take further steps to call the school to account for its actions in relation to pupils' learning.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the EYFS in the Nursery with skills below those usually expected of children this age. The welcoming atmosphere and good care taken of the children by the staff are evident in the Nursery and Reception classes and enable children to settle in well. Parents are encouraged to be involved in children's learning and development. Children's personal, social and emotional development is particularly good. As a result, children are confident when working independently or with an adult or other children. Children's skills in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy are also strong and aided by good curriculum opportunities, such as when Reception children carry out a space hunt in the covered area outdoors. Unfortunately, however, this impacts adversely on the Nursery children. Because of the limited space available outdoors, the Nursery cannot provide a continuous outdoor curriculum. Development through this stage is slower in communication, language and literacy. Sometimes speaking and listening is promoted well by the staff, although on occasions the questioning limits the extent to which children develop their speaking skills and answer at length giving explanation of their understanding. The good impact of the 'Letters and Sounds' programme is beginning to be felt in Key Stage 1. The EYFS environment is bright and cheerful. It provides suitable stimulus and there is a wide range of resources which encourage children in role-play activities. Planning provides for suitable coverage of all areas of the curriculum except planning for continuous outdoor provision. The very small area for outdoor learning for all children limits the numbers who may access outdoor learning opportunities. Both Leadership and management, and teaching and learning, are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing throughout the school.
- Ensure that teachers provide appropriate challenge by matching work more closely to pupils' needs, particularly for higher attaining pupils.
- Make better provision in EYFS for children's learning outdoors.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils are prepared satisfactorily for Key Stage 1 overall but aspects of language, particularly writing, and also pupils' creative ability are below expected levels. Satisfactory progress is made through Key Stage 1 overall. Although standards are broadly average, writing still remains below the national average. The introduction of the 'Letters and Sounds' programme in the

EYFS is having a positive impact on pupils' language skills. Progress through Key Stage 2 has been inconsistent. For example, when writing showed some improvement in 2007, standards in mathematics declined. The current picture is an improving one with standards being broadly average in English, mathematics and science. Evidence from current data shows this improvement is good at the top of the key stage. In other classes things are improving, but less rapidly as a result of inconsistent teaching. There are some pupils who could do better, particularly the higher attaining. Pupils' writing independently and at length is still the weakest aspect. The school has strategies in place which are beginning to have a positive impact on standards in some classes. However, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making satisfactory and sometimes good progress because of the well organised provision made and their appropriate targets. The small proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language make similar progress to others as a result of effective support. This support ensures that these pupils are included well in all lessons. Girls and boys achieve equally as well as each other.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

St Mary's lives up to its aim of ensuring that the school is, in the words of some pupils, 'a place where all children feel able to make the best of themselves'. Pupils are proud of their school and say they enjoy coming. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school showing respect for staff and one another. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. The well run school council is an effective means of fostering a sense of responsibility and giving pupils a say in the running of their school. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good. All know about the dangers of the misuse of drugs and how to deal with bullying, and are provided with good opportunities to explore their feelings and emotions. Pupils' attendance is currently in line with the national average. Community links are strong and pupils make a good contribution to their school, the church and the wider community. The school prepares pupils satisfactorily for their future. Some aspects are strong, such as developing good attitudes and relationships, but essential skills such as writing are not consistently developed well enough at present.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The lessons seen give a picture of teaching which is variable in quality, linked to some of the inconsistency in pupils' progress. Relationships are good. Pupils like their teachers and most respond well to them even when, on occasions, the teaching is not overly inspiring. Teachers manage pupils effectively and this is reflected in the positive attitudes and behaviour. Where teaching is most effective and pupils learn well the lessons are lively so that all are fully engaged, tasks relate to pupils' interests and are well matched to their ability, providing them with challenge, so that they make good progress. Where it is less effective, teachers plan the same task for all pupils so that the lesson proceeds at the pace of the slowest, insufficiently challenging to retain the attention of the more able pupils. On occasions, teaching assistants are not used effectively enough to support pupils' learning. When they work with small groups the quality of learning is much better. In the best lessons good use is made of technology, which enhances the pace of learning. The school has satisfactory systems for assessing pupils' progress and, following recommendations in the previous inspection, most teachers are now making better use of information to build on pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Improving the curriculum is a key focus of staff to ensure that it has a greater impact on raising standards, particularly in English and mathematics. Promoting literacy and numeracy skills has a high profile in subjects such as science and in topic work. Examples of good practice in writing are displayed around the school but in some classes there is too little guidance for pupils. Parents are involved in advancing reading skills with many coming into school to hear readers in Year 2. This has paid dividends with standards improving in reading. The curriculum for French is being developed well in Year 4. All pupils in this year also learn to play the guitar. Staff are beginning to tailor the curriculum more to the needs and interests of pupils. Some good links are being made between subjects, combining skills from a range of subjects in different topic themes. The contribution the curriculum makes to pupils' personal development and well-being is good. Pupils' cultural development, for example, is promoted well through studying different world religions and celebrating festivals from other faiths. The school provides a good variety of well attended enrichment activities, such as various sports opportunities, two choirs and other after-school clubs, including drama and preparing a school newspaper. Attention given to musical activities is reflected in some very sweet-sounding singing in assembly.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a caring school where pupils are given good guidance and support. All safeguarding procedures are met fully. A strength is undoubtedly its work on inclusion. Staff are supported effectively by a dedicated and knowledgeable coordinator of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and by two family workers. They ensure good support in lessons and individual help for some pupils experiencing difficulty out of class. The carefully chosen programme of activities and involvement of parents by the family workers successfully raises self-esteem and helps pupils to meet their targets. As a result, they make satisfactory progress. The coordinator takes care to ensure that pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported well. There are clear procedures for promoting good behaviour with sanctions and rewards to encourage pupils to behave appropriately. Most respond well to these and there were only two brief exclusions last year. Effective strategies supported by parents have improved attendance. The school works well with outside agencies to ensure that consistent care and support is given. Pupils are beginning to be aware of their targets in literacy and numeracy but these targets need to be more challenging for some pupils. Teachers' marking is generally thorough and gives pupils guidance on how to improve their work further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is led by a most capable and well respected headteacher, acknowledged by her colleagues to have 'made a difference'. A good team spirit is evident throughout all levels of staff. The senior leadership team and those in middle management are developing as effective teams to provide increasing support. There is a clear determination to improve the school but the full impact of the strategies for improvement is yet to be seen. While their overall evaluation of the school and its performance is satisfactory, some issues are not always clearly identified. Systems to track pupils' progress are in place and improved analysis is now providing clear

information to set suitably challenging targets, especially for the most able. This is beginning to raise standards, but inconsistencies between classes still exist. There is good provision to ensure that all pupils are included in school activities. This is seen in the performance of small groups and also in the good community spirit of the school. Thoughtful planning of school activities ensures that all aspects of community cohesion are covered and that pupils are aware of and appreciate the diversity of the community where they live. Resources are used satisfactorily, with satisfactory value for money, although on occasions some teaching assistants could be deployed more effectively. The outdoor area provided for the EYFS does not meet the needs of those children sufficiently well. Governors are strongly supportive of the school and involve themselves where possible in its activities. However, their role as critical friend in questioning the impact of strategies put into place to improve pupils' performance is not sufficiently well developed. Good links exist with outside agencies and the school receives strong support from parents.

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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?	3
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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 so much for your very friendly welcome when we inspected your school recently. It was a pleasure to talk to you and to see and hear how much you enjoy being at St Mary's. You are lucky to have lots of additional opportunities in the many after-school clubs and it is very pleasing to see how many of you attend them.

We judged your school to be satisfactory but with a number of good things.

- Your behaviour is good. You are polite and respectful to your teachers and to others.
- The care that is provided by adults so that you feel safe and looked after.
- The good community spirit in the school and the way you work well together.
- The way that most of you try really hard to do your best in lessons.
- How well your attendance has improved this year.

We know that you and the teachers want to make the school even better. We have asked your teachers to help you, in particular, to improve your standards in writing. You can all help by trying even harder! We have also asked your teachers to make sure that the work they ask you to do makes you all have to think hard so that you will make better progress. The area where Reception and Nursery children should be learning outside is not sufficient for them to learn really well so we want the school to improve this.