

# St Mary's RC Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105727
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oldham
<b>Inspection number</b>	308936
<b>Inspection date</b>	15 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jim Kidd

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	468
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Christine Williamson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Bernadette Cunningham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 July 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Clive Road Failsworth Manchester Lancashire M35 0NN
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 6816663
<b>Fax number</b>	0161 6841134

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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: the progress made by pupils across the school, provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the school's progress in embedding new leadership and management structures, including the introduction of curriculum teams. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form (SEF), nationally published assessment data, the school's own assessment records, relevant policies, observations of the school at work, including visits to lessons and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Discussions were also held with staff, the vice-chair of governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence that the school's own assessments of these aspects, as given in its SEF, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

This larger than average sized school serves a mixed area and its pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. The majority of pupils are of White British origin and there are few pupils from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below that usually found but there are increasing numbers with a statement of special educational need. St Mary's is an Investor in People and holds the Activemark award for its work in sport and physical activity. It has been designated a 'barrier free' school by the local authority and is accessible to pupils with a wide range of additional needs.

## 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 in which pupils' attendance, personal development and the care, guidance and support provided for them are outstanding. Pupils are accurate when they say, 'We look after everyone here and all are made to feel welcome in our school.' Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and a typical comment summing up the views of many is, 'The school is warm and welcoming and teachers have a genuine interest in ensuring that our children are happy, safe and learn in a fun environment.'

From starting points that are broadly as expected when they enter the Nursery, pupils make good progress during their time in school and reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. Over recent years, there has been an upward trend in standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1. Strategies to address the difference in attainment reached by boys and girls in Years 1 and 2 continue to be effective and the gap has narrowed markedly. Standards in Key Stage 2 have improved since the previous inspection, particularly in English and there is no significant difference in the progress made by all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties/and or disabilities. The school sets challenging targets, which are invariably met and often exceeded.

An overriding concern for the well-being of others is a major strength in pupils' excellent personal development. In class, on corridors and in the playground, pupils look after each other: older pupils, prefects and members of the very well-respected school council enjoy supporting younger children, for example, in their play, in their reading and on the way to church. Behaviour is impeccable, mutual respect abounds and courtesy to both adults and children is the order of the day. Links with a school in Uganda and with other schools in the local area are valued by pupils and contribute strongly to their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Moreover, a plethora of sports activities keeps pupils fit and they are never afraid to offer visitors advice on the importance of eating healthily and how to do it! They also make most complimentary remarks about the variety and quality of fare served up in the school canteen. Consistently good achievement in pupils' academic work and the increased use of new technology as a learning tool prepare them well for the next stage in their educational careers.

The quality of teaching and learning is good and there are examples of outstanding practice in both key stages. In the best lessons, pupils are fully engaged in the activities and are quite desperate to answer questions. They enjoy working as 'talk partners' when they are producing stories and factual reports because, as pupils in Year 5 said, 'We like helping each other and two brains are better than one!' Pupils respond willingly to the high expectations teachers have of them and often surprise themselves at what they can do. For example, in one lesson, pupils were extremely proud of the 'wow words' they produced and were delighted when their classmates used 'ferocious', 'comical' and 'crooked' in their stories.

The curriculum is good and meets the needs, aspirations and interests of the pupils well, and is augmented by a wide range of enrichment, extra-curricular and sports activities. Curriculum planning does not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to take more responsibility for their own progress and does not offer pupils engaging learning activities in all areas. Nonetheless, the extent of pupils' use of technology across the curriculum has improved over the previous three years and most classrooms are now equipped with electronic whiteboards and computers for pupils' use.

The school rightly prides itself on its commitment to the inclusion of all pupils in everything it has to offer. Care and guidance for each individual, irrespective of their ability, are of the highest order. The talented and committed team of teaching assistants provide excellent support for pupils, often on an individual basis, and pupils speak glowingly of the help they receive. Pupils regarded as vulnerable are identified accurately and appropriate strategies to meet their needs are introduced rapidly and very effectively with the result that they make the same progress as their peers. Assessment of pupils' academic progress is now of high quality across all subjects and pupils are given very well founded advice as to how they can improve their work. As a result, pupils know how well they are performing and are fully aware of what they need to do to reach their potential. Progress in personal development is recognised too and pupils eagerly await the Friday assembly when the names of those entered in the 'Golden Book' are revealed! Child protection and safeguarding procedures are in place and meet fully the national guidelines.

The newly appointed headteacher, ably supported by the leadership team, has a clear vision for how the school should develop and is fully committed to enhancing further the school's engagement with the local and wider communities. Self-evaluation is effective and leads to a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The recently established curriculum teams are making good progress in ensuring that the school continues to place the Every Child Matters agenda at the forefront of everything it does. Staff are excited about the future and comment that these new teams are leading to the increased sharing of good practice and new ideas across all staff, including support assistants. Governors are fully supportive of the school and play a strong part in many activities. They have a good awareness of performance in all areas of school life but are never afraid to hold the leadership rigorously to account when they feel the need to do so. Consistently above average standards, impressive personal development and effective leadership and management indicate that the school has good capacity for further improvement and that it provides good value for money. St Mary's is a school where the well-being of its pupils, both academically and personally is paramount.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

The provision in the EYFS is good. The difference in children's achievement between the Nursery and Reception noted at the last inspection has been addressed. Children enter the Nursery with skills that are broadly typical for their age, but a significant number have low level skills in communication, language and literacy. As a result of detailed assessments of children's individual needs when they enter, teachers and teaching assistants are able to direct their intervention accurately. Children, therefore, make good progress through the EYFS as a result, and by the end of Reception, increasing numbers are reaching average levels in communication, language and literacy, and in their personal and emotional development. Indeed, skill levels reached in these areas were the highest on record in 2008.

The curriculum provides a good balance between adult-led activities and those chosen by the children themselves. Children behave very well indeed in both Nursery and Reception and enjoy working with and helping each other when problems in their games have to be solved. Children are well looked after. They are inquisitive and enjoy talking to visitors and showing them the different activities in which they can take part. They look up to the older pupils in the school and like the many opportunities they have to engage with them. Leadership and management are good, have ensured effective improvements since the previous inspection and strategic plans for the development of the EYFS area are well founded. Staff recognise that access to

outdoor play and resources for outdoor learning need to be developed if children's progress is to accelerate further.

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

- Ensure the curriculum is planned to provide more opportunities for pupils to take more responsibility for their own progress and offer engaging learning activities in all areas.
- Improve resources for outdoor learning and access to outdoor play in the EYFS.

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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?	2
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	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	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/or disabilities make progress	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.



## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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

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

## 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	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

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

Thank you all so much for your lovely welcome and for your kindness to me when I inspected St Mary's recently. It was a pleasure to visit your classes and to talk to you. I am particularly grateful to those of you who showed me round and to the members of the school council who gave up much of their lunchtime to chat with me. I would like to tell you the really good things about your school.

St Mary's is a good school and you told me that you really enjoy attending it and that you feel safe because of the outstanding support you get from both adults and other pupils. You behave excellently and work hard in your lessons. You make good progress in your subjects because you are taught well by your teachers and teaching assistants. You have so many responsibilities in school and older pupils, in particular, act as lunchtime monitors and do so much to look after the children in the Nursery and Reception classes. You have a good understanding of why it is important to eat healthily and the many games and sports activities in which you take part help you to keep fit. You enjoy going to church and have a wide variety of trips and educational visits during the year. You also like the links you have with other schools in the area and the steel band can't wait for the concerts to start up again!

Your headteacher and all the other staff are very proud of you and work so hard to make sure that school is enjoyable for you. They have many plans to make St Mary's even better. I have asked them to make sure that all learning activities are interesting and engaging and to give you more opportunities for you to take responsibility to find more things out for yourselves. You'll make even better progress if you do this! I have also asked the school to make it easier for children in the Nursery and Reception to be able to learn outdoors and provide better outdoor play equipment.

Thanks once again for helping with the inspection. Please keep working hard, looking after each other and enjoying school.