

# St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Middleton

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105818
<b>Local Authority</b>	Rochdale
<b>Inspection number</b>	308960
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Robert Robinson

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

---

<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	335
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Fr T Mullins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr M Atkins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	31 March 2003
<b>School address</b>	Wood Street Langley Middleton Manchester M24 5GL
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 6437594
<b>Fax number</b>	0161 6546487

---

<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 October 2007
<b>Inspection number</b>	308960

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a large primary school situated within a socially disadvantaged area. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. A high proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Eligibility for free school meals is well above average. The school has gained the Basic Skills Award, Activemark (Gold) and Artsmark (Gold).

## 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 which serves its community well and provides good value for money. Good leadership and management and good teaching and learning result in pupils' good achievement and broadly average standards by the time they leave the school. The school cares for its pupils exceptionally well and their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Parents appreciate the education and care provided for their children. A typical comment encapsulated the feelings of most parents, 'It's a lovely school where my child has come on in leaps and bounds.'

Pupils achieve well because teaching and the curriculum are good. Most lessons are planned well. Consistent organisation of learning with effective methods in managing pupils' behaviour results in harmonious relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are exemplary. Teaching assistants are used well to help those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils have rich experiences in art, drama and sport. Displays of work are attractive though rarely celebrate pupils' written work and writing skills are not practised sufficiently in other subjects. Teachers' marking of work is satisfactory though not consistent. In some age groups the marking clearly states how well pupils have done and how they can improve. However, in others, the marking simply praises and does not provide helpful comments as to what could have been improved.

Standards have improved since the last inspection and are now close to average. In particular, standards in English have risen considerably over the past two years to be broadly average. The national tests results at the end of Year 6 in 2006 and 2007 showed that pupils reached much higher standards in reading than in writing. The development of writing skills has been a high priority for development recently but, standards in writing remain below those normally seen.

Pupils enjoy school and the majority attend regularly. The superb sporting facilities are appreciated by pupils. These are used particularly well both in lessons and for extra-curricular activities. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy. Strong links with the Parish provide pupils with many opportunities to assist others in the community as well as to consider the needs of others through fund-raising for worthy causes. Bullying and racial incidents are very rare because pupils care for one another exceptionally well and know that staff will always listen to their concerns.

The headteacher, who is ably helped by the deputy headteacher, other staff and governors, strives to provide a good all-round education for all pupils. The good progress and grasp of basic skills and outstanding attitudes to learning prepare pupils well for future learning.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) is satisfactory. Children enter Nursery, with very low levels of knowledge and skills for their age. Teaching and learning is satisfactory in all the areas of learning. Standards by the end of Reception remain well below those normally expected. In the Nursery a strong emphasis on personal, social and emotional development helps children to settle and understand school life and routines. Member of staff in the Nursery work well with small groups of pupils at the start of sessions but activities, particularly outdoors, are not structured sufficiently well to initiate and develop learning. The

outdoor accommodation is not a stimulating learning environment. Links between Nursery and Reception are satisfactory. In the Reception class children work well together though sometimes noisily. The accommodation limits the development of learning outdoors, yet opportunities are missed to extend learning outside the classroom. For example, when children were developing their understanding of shapes and number recognition, no activities were planned outdoors or around the school despite the availability of additional staffing. Sometimes activities indoors do not have a clear learning intention and are not linked sufficiently well to individuals' prior skills. Indoors resources are used well, including information and communication technology. Teaching assistants and teachers provide good help to small groups of pupils, but questions are not sufficiently probing in order to draw out children's understanding and to develop their communication and language skills. The partnership with parents is good. Despite the school's best efforts, a minority of parents do not appreciate the importance of good attendance and punctuality to their children's learning. The recording of children's attainments is good, though the information is used only satisfactorily to hasten their progress. Plans are in place to appoint a Foundation Stage leader to manage the Nursery and Reception. In the meantime interim arrangements provide satisfactory leadership and management.

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

- Improve the Foundation Stage curriculum and make better use of assessment information to speed up children's progress.
- Improve standards in writing throughout the school.
- Improve marking so that pupils have a better understanding of how to improve their work.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good. Standards in the national tests in 2006 were below average overall but improved in 2007 to be close to national expectations. The present group of pupils in Year 6 have made good progress since the start of Year 3 and their standards are broadly average. Pupils make steady progress in Years 1 and 2 relative to their low starting points and then in Years 3 to 6 progress speeds up. Standards at the end of Year 6 in English are bolstered by pupils' good performance in reading in Years 3 to 6. Writing standards throughout the school are not high enough and lag behind those in reading, mathematics and science.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of the school's success. The school's caring ethos promotes a strong sense of community together with outstanding behaviour, relationships and attitudes to work. Harmonious cultural relationships contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment and sense of safety within the school community. A pupil remarked that, 'at my last school I was called names about my brown skin but this does not happen here'. Pupils' basic skills are developed well and they know how to keep fit and understand the need to eat healthily. Attendance is satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality improve as pupils move through the school.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. In lessons, pupils have positive attitudes to learning because lessons are organised well and teachers explain clearly what pupils are expected to learn. Occasionally, the planning of lessons does not challenge higher attaining pupils sufficiently. The management of pupils' behaviour is consistent throughout the school which leads to no time being lost dealing with behavioural issues. Interactive whiteboards help pupils to understand new learning and to consolidate and extend earlier learning. Teaching assistants are well briefed so that they support lower attainers effectively. Occasionally, they are not used well enough when the whole class is being taught together. The marking of pupils' work is variable so that some are unsure of what they need to do to improve, particularly at the start of an academic year.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Broad and balanced curricular experiences for all pupils with a good emphasis on the promotion of basic skills and personal, social, health and citizenship education help pupils to make good progress in their learning. This prepares them well for future life. Good use is made of visits and visitors to add interest to learning. The linking of subjects together is increasingly used to enhance learning. For example, a historical study of slavery engaged pupils' interest through the effective use of art and drama. The topic also encouraged pupils to write at length in different styles. This good practice is inconsistent throughout the school and opportunities are missed to develop pupils' writing in other subjects. Pupils say how much they appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities, as well as the many sporting activities both during lessons and after school.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Health and safety and risk assessments promote a safe environment. Parents and pupils agree that children are looked after well. The systems to ensure pupils' attendance are rigorous. The school makes sure parents are aware of the value of regular attendance and not taking holidays during term time. It highlights concerns conscientiously to the education welfare officer of pupils whose attendance and punctuality are not good enough. The systems in place from Years 1 to 6 to track pupils' progress are detailed and informative. The information assists teachers and leaders to identify quickly pupils needing additional help and results in all groups of pupils making good progress.

## Leadership and management

#### Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are a well established effective team and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have good support from a dedicated governing body. Governors keenly seek to ensure the school meets its high

expectations of providing pupils with a good education with a strong emphasis on the care and personal development of pupils.

Senior leaders are committed to the professional development of all staff. The recently established senior management team, comprising of middle managers linked to different areas of the school, are fulfilling their duties well. Their understanding of educational practice has benefited from visits to schools in other countries, including Oman, Poland, Mauritius and Siberia, through British Council and diocesan initiatives. Challenging targets are set for teachers linked to the school's priorities as well the progress pupils make in their classes.

Outdoor sporting facilities are superb but the external area for the Reception class is not directly accessible to the classroom which limits opportunities to link work in the classroom with outdoor education. This rambling building creates access difficulties particularly between the Foundation Stage/Year 1 and 2 areas with Years 3 to 6. The cost of maintaining this huge site places a strain on the school's funding. Nevertheless, because of the enthusiasm and strengths in the leadership and management, the commitment of staff and the improvements in standards and achievement already managed the school provides good value for money and has clear capacity to continue to improve.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

### 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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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

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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	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

<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.

## Annex A

**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 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

---

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

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school. We enjoyed the two days we spent with you and our discussions. Your school provides you with a good education because it is led and managed well. The care provided by the school and your personal development are outstanding.

We were impressed by your excellent behaviour and interest in lessons. At all times you were polite and courteous. We were pleased that you all get on so well together. To improve the school further we have asked the school to look again at the curriculum in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) and the use of the information teachers have about children's attainment to speed up their progress. The standard of your work by the time you leave the school has improved and is now about average. However, you do better in reading and mathematics than in writing. So we have asked the school to find ways to improve your standards in writing. We have also asked your teachers to make sure you have a better understanding of how to improve your work.

We appreciated talking to you about your work and watching you learn. We trust that you will continue to work with the headteacher and other staff to help them to continue to improve the school. We wish you well for the future.