

St Mark's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105949
Local Authority	Salford
Inspection number	308991
Inspection date	2 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Aitken

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)	344
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	Cllr Ian Macdonald
Headteacher	Mrs Jill Johnson
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	Aviary Road Walkden Worsley Manchester Lancashire M28 2WF
Telephone number	0161 7903423

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	2 December 2008
Inspection number	308991

Fax number

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Age group	3-11
Inspection date	2 December 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); pupils' standards and achievement in mathematics and the impact of the redesign of the curriculum on pupils' personal development and academic standards. The inspectors gathered evidence from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes. The school was observed at work and discussions were held with senior members of staff, pupils and the chair of governors. Replies to the parents' questionnaires were also considered. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This large school is situated in a pleasant semi-rural setting. Most pupils come from favourable social and economic backgrounds in the immediate locality, but some pupils come from less advantaged areas further afield. Nearly all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average. Provision for the EYFS is through Nursery and Reception classes. There are pre-school and before- and after-school provisions on site, which are run by private providers and did not form part of this inspection. The school holds the National Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark and the Artsmark (Silver) Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features, including the behaviour of pupils and the high standards they often reach. Staff ensure that classrooms are bright and stimulating places for pupils. Good relationships between adults and pupils ensure that pupils feel safe, secure and happy in school.

From starting points which are generally above those typical for their age, children make satisfactory progress in the EYFS. By the time they commence Year 1, pupils' skills and knowledge are above national expectations. This start is built on satisfactorily in Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 2, standards are above average. This has been confirmed in the last two national assessments for Year 2 pupils and currently remains the case. The school has recognised some underperformance in mathematics at the higher levels in Key Stage 1 and has put in place a number of measures to assess and track pupils' progress in the subject more frequently. To date, these steps have had a limited impact on raising standards for more able pupils. Pupils' progress accelerates in Key Stage 2 in response to some exceptional teaching. Standards are high in Year 5 and Year 6, which represents good progress for these pupils from their starting points at the beginning of Key Stage 2. Good opportunities to develop and reinforce literacy skills ensure that pupils acquire a very sound grasp of spelling rules and sentence construction. Pupils handle mathematical concepts and measuring techniques confidently. However, occasionally, opportunities are missed in all subjects to develop pupils' skills at a more advanced level and to stretch and challenge more able pupils fully. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively supported by teaching assistants in lessons and make good progress.

Pupils' personal development is good overall and some elements are exceptional. Pupils have a highly developed awareness of how to stay healthy and keep safe. Even very young children can explain why it is important to wear a seatbelt in cars. They respond exceptionally well to reverential moments in assemblies. They reflect sensitively on their own lives and the lives of children in other countries, while acknowledging the debt they owe to other members of the local community. Project work, for example, on the Indian village of Chembakolli, enables them to compare and contrast their lives with people in less advantaged circumstances and to gain an appreciation of fair trade issues. Pupils are confident, self-reliant and behave exceptionally well. For example, they quickly swallow the disappointment of not playing outside during wet playtimes and use the short break very well for silent reading, extra writing or constructive play. Pupils' social development is good. They contribute well to the community, for example, through charity fund-raising and by representing the school in sport and the performing arts. Each class contributed a very interesting display on a 1960s theme to mark the recent 40th anniversary of the school building. Pupils carry out their duties as monitors and as play leaders very effectively. Pupils' good achievement in their basic skills sets them up well for their later lives.

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and academic development. Its success in enabling pupils to develop healthy lifestyles has been recognised in the school's recent awards. An interesting range of visits and visitors, including representatives from the emergency services enriches the curriculum. Pupils have had the opportunity to learn a modern foreign language for a number of years and a wider range has been provided for pupils of all ages this year. A recent change to the curriculum, which has put more focus on a topic-based approach to learning, is helping older pupils, in particular, to develop their skills in more creative ways. The school has, recently, formally identified gifted and talented pupils and is putting in

place a wider range of measures to cater more directly for their needs, including a rearrangement of Key Stage 2 classes for mathematics. This initiative is at too early a stage for its impact on standards to be judged reliably.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, but varies between satisfactory and outstanding. In the best lessons, expectations of pupils' behaviour and progress are high and teaching methods are varied and enterprising. Very good use is made of paired partner routines to enable pupils to develop and express their ideas. This helps to build their self-confidence and adds to their enjoyment of learning. In these lessons, pupils learn very productively because teachers provide them with useful oral and written feedback and very effective guidance on how to proceed during independent activities. No time is lost, pupils are fully engaged in their learning and sustain their interest and concentration throughout the lesson. In other lessons, these exemplary elements are less to the fore and planning is less focused on expected outcomes. On these occasions, the pace of learning is less brisk and more able pupils have few good opportunities to be stretched and challenged.

The school cares for, guides and supports its pupils well. It liaises well with outside agencies to remove or reduce barriers to learning for those pupils with identified needs and has established a small after-school club to encourage more participation in sport and physical activity. Relevant, required procedures are in place for child protection, for safeguarding pupils and for health and safety. Good links with parents and secondary schools ensure that pupils settle well in school and transfer smoothly to the next stage of their education. The school is progressively putting in place a series of measures to track and assess pupils' progress more comprehensively and this is beginning to have an impact on pupils' progress.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and staff with leadership responsibility provide clear direction for the work of the school. Key priorities are identified and actions are taken purposefully to tackle areas for improvement and to maintain a steady focus on raising standards and achievement. School self-evaluation is accurate in the main, although it contains over-optimistic judgements on a few aspects of the school's provision. Leadership roles are being redeveloped. This is to enable newer appointments to the role to acquire greater middle management experience and to help senior leaders monitor pupils' achievements more closely across the full range of subjects, including information and communication technology (ICT). Governors support the work of the school satisfactorily. They acknowledge the need to strengthen systems to promote their more active involvement in checking on the work of the school. Overall, the school has developed well since its previous inspection, offers good value for money and is well set for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The EYFS provides a satisfactory quality of education. Children join the Nursery with knowledge and skills which are generally above those typical for their age. Children make satisfactory progress over the two years in all areas of learning and their skills are above average when they join Year 1. Children settle well in the Nursery, quickly acquire positive attitudes to their learning and behave well. They fully understand the staff's careful reminders to dress for warmth on cold days and the dangers that snow and ice pose for outdoor play. Children's learning is satisfactory overall. Stronger features of teaching, which are more to the fore in the Nursery, include good questioning skills and modelling language effectively to help children build their conversational fluency. A good range of resources and additional adults, who are effectively deployed, support children's learning well. The Nursery curriculum is well balanced and children's

achievements are carefully recorded to inform planning. Some complexities in the layout of the accommodation in Reception hamper the staff's efforts to ensure children are fully engaged in their learning. Children make choices from a good variety of activities. Most follow up their interests and learn purposefully, but some quickly lose focus and consequently derive less benefit from these good opportunities. Lesson planning is less securely focused on expected outcomes for the Reception children and provides fewer good opportunities for all children, including the more able, to develop their skills fully. Children's achievements across the two years are tracked effectively. Other arrangements for monitoring the quality of provision are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching and learning throughout the EYFS is of a good standard.
- Provide better opportunities for more able pupils in all year groups to be challenged and stretched in their learning.

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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?	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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	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**

My colleague and I really enjoyed our inspection of your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful to us. We particularly enjoyed talking to you at break and lunchtime, and of course, in lessons. You go to a good school.

These are some of the best things we found out about your school.

n Children get off to a satisfactory start in Nursery and Reception. By the time you leave school in Year 6 your standards are high and you have made good progress in all subjects. You do particularly well in Years 4 to 6.

n Your personal development is good overall and some parts are excellent. You have a 'top-class' knowledge of how to stay safe and keep healthy. We were also very impressed by your behaviour, for example, in assembly, and also during the wet playtime. You also make excellent use in assembly of chances to think quietly about your own lives and the lives of other people in the wider community and overseas.

- Staff look after you well to make sure you are safe, happy and enjoy school.
- The headteacher and her senior staff direct the work of the school well.

I have asked your school to do the following to help to make it even better.

- Make sure that all children have learnt well by the time they join Year 1.
- Find better ways to stretch those of you who find learning easier than most.

You can help by keeping up your very good attitudes and behaviour and by continuing to try hard in everything that you do in school.