

St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106349
Local Authority	Trafford
Inspection number	309105
Inspection dates	12–13 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Allan Torr HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	191
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr I Artus
Headteacher	Mrs B Davies
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2004
School address	Cornhill Rd Davyhulme Urmston MANCHESTER M41 5TJ
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Introduction

The school was inspected by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Mary's is slightly smaller than the average primary school. It has no school field but has access to some local sporting facilities. The vast majority of pupils are White British and there are a relatively small proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or with a statement of special educational need are below the national average. There is a greater than average proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than in Reception and Year 6. The school has gained the national Healthy Schools Award and Basic Skills Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Mary's is a satisfactory school. There are strengths in the provision for the youngest children in the Reception class and in pupils' contribution to the school and local community. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in the running of the school through, for example, being members of the excellent school council. This is re-elected termly so that more pupils can participate and voice their opinions. Pupils can apply to be a member of the effective 'playground squad', who help to organise break times and to ensure that pupils have someone to play with and are happy. Pupils also make a significant contribution to the local community through close links with the local church and by supporting charities and good causes such as St Ann's Hospice. One parent summed up the views of many, commenting, 'St Mary's has a very warm and friendly ethos, with a real community spirit, while maintaining good discipline.' The pupils are a real credit to the school; they behave well and have good personal development and well-being.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical of four-and-five-year-olds. They get off to a flying start and make rapid progress so that by the time they enter Year 1 most pupils have reached the early learning goals and have exceeded levels that are expected of them. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 reaching levels in the national assessments at the end of Year 2 that are above and sometimes well above the national average. This is because teaching in Reception and Key Stage 1 is lively, exciting, and challenges pupils of all abilities. Although teaching in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory overall, a relatively high proportion of lessons are not of sufficient quality to enable the more able pupils to make good progress. The activities that pupils complete are often low level and do not challenge the more able pupils, for example, only completing a few words on a worksheet or colouring pictures. Consequently, by the end of Year 6 pupils' standards are broadly average. From their starting points this reflects satisfactory achievement.

Pupils have targets to achieve in English and mathematics and their work is marked diligently. However, many pupils do not know what their targets are; do not know what levels they are working at or how to improve their work. Some pupils pay insufficient attention to teachers' marking, which results in only satisfactory progress. Pastoral care is good and a particular strength is the way in which new pupils to the school are welcomed. The curriculum is satisfactory. The school has linked some subjects together so that pupils can see connections between them when studying a topic. The teaching of the topics however, particularly in Key Stage 2, is not challenging enough so pupils are not able to build sufficiently on their prior learning and skills. The school does well to counteract the difficulties of not having a school field by using partnerships with local organisations. This enables pupils to use tennis courts, a local sports field and another school and ensures that pupils receive their full entitlement. The systems, policies and processes to maintain health, safety and welfare are good. Some systems hinder pupils' extra-curricular experiences which mean, for example, there are few opportunities to compete against other schools in different sports.

The majority of pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their attendance, which is consistently above the national average. They have a good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. The take-up of healthy school meals and healthy snacks is rising and pupils make good use of opportunities to be active at break times - it was good to see so many using the playground equipment available. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how to stay safe.

The headteacher supported by her able deputy headteacher ensures the smooth running of the school. School leaders and managers set targets for pupils but the use of these targets to raise standards is inadequate. Standards have fallen slightly in the last three years. Governance is satisfactory but some governors have insufficient knowledge of how to self-evaluate or of how to measure attainment and achievement. This means that they are not well placed to be able to support the school. The school has successfully tackled the issues identified at the last inspection, particularly in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum. Leaders and managers have identified some of the main areas of weakness and strength in the school and have started to tackle them, for example by providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of scientific investigation. Consequently, the capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Since the last inspection improvements have been made to the provision and it is now outstanding. Children enter from a large number of settings with skills that are broadly typical of children this age except in personal and social development, which is not so well developed. The outstanding teaching engages all children and their excitement and willingness to learn is clearly visible. This results in rapid progress being made in children's skills and knowledge. The curriculum is dynamic and exciting. When children learn new skills from adults, they consolidate them in well planned activities inside and outside the classroom. In one outstanding lesson, the teacher presented children with a challenge to test out a puppet's boast that he is the biggest toy in the school. Armed with measuring equipment the children took to the challenge and extended their measuring skills through engaging purposeful activities. There is a very good focus on the development of number skills and early reading skills. Teaching and assessment are used purposefully to challenge children of all abilities. Very good use is made of a small tight space outdoors so that children are engaged in purposeful learning activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the more able pupils are challenged so that a greater proportion attain Level 5 in national assessments by the end of Year 6.
- Enable pupils to know how well they are doing in their work and what they need to do to improve.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 2.
- Enable senior leaders and managers to use targets effectively to raise standards.

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 enter Key Stage 1 with skills and knowledge that are above average for their age apart from their personal and social skills, which are slightly below average. Pupils make good progress so that by the end of Year 2, in the national assessments, almost every pupil reaches the expected Level 2 and a relatively large proportion of pupils attain Level 3. There has been some fluctuation in results over time. In reading and mathematics, standards have increased for the last three years and in 2007 were well above average. Approximately three quarters of pupils

attained Level 2a, which is above average. In mathematics, almost half of pupils attained Level 3. In writing, standards were well above average in 2006 and in 2007 were above average. The school's data and inspection evidence shows that pupils' writing skills are above average.

For the last three years, the progress that pupils make in Key Stage 2 has declined slightly. Although progress overall is satisfactory, the high-attaining pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics, are not maintaining the good progress that they made in Key Stage 1. Overall, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have fallen slightly for the last three years. In English, standards by the end of Year 6 are slightly above average with 91% attaining the expected Level 4. In mathematics, standards are broadly average. In science there is a declining trend with fewer pupils than nationally attaining the higher Level 5 in 2007.

Pupils with a learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because their needs are identified early and their progress is carefully checked. Pupils from a non-White British heritage make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are a credit to the school. They are friendly, articulate in expressing their views and opinions, and they are able to think, reason and reflect about other people. Pupils collaborate and cooperate well. In one lesson, for example, pupils worked well in teams to produce a mathematical presentation of data. Pupils' preparation for their future work life is satisfactory. They have some opportunities to organise events and to develop independent working skills but the more able pupils are not challenged enough and are not able to improve quickly on their own learning. Pupils' behaviour is good and there are few occasions when formal sanctions are required. There are few racist incidents and pupils feel safe from harassment. They generally feel confident that they have someone to speak to. A few younger pupils feel vulnerable in the playground at lunchtime.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning overall is satisfactory but the quality varies significantly between Key Stage 1 and 2. In Key Stage 1 teaching is good and often outstanding. In one outstanding lesson, the teacher asked pupils to hold and feel some melting ice. An email came into the class from a penguin asking the class to find a way of keeping the ice from melting. In Key Stage 2 teaching is satisfactory overall but there are too many inadequate lessons. The consequence of this is the uneven picture of progress in the school where pupils make rapid progress when they are younger and slower progress in Years 3 to 6. ICT resources including recording equipment are used very well to extend learning; this is a significant improvement since the last inspection. As a result, standards in ICT are high. Nevertheless, the choice of other resources and worksheets sometimes hinders learning because pupils are constrained, only have to complete a minimum amount of writing or thinking and so are not challenged sufficiently. Assessment is good. Regular checks on pupils' attainment enables teachers to know what level pupils are working at. However, in Key Stage 2 information from assessments is not being used effectively to plan lessons and activities that challenge pupils or that are sufficiently matched to their abilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the needs and interests of the majority of pupils. Subjects are linked together and taught through topics. In Key Stage 2 the topic work is often not challenging enough for the more able pupils. Pupils of different abilities often complete the same work. In Key Stage 2, some activities lack relevance or purpose; consequently, their impact on learning and progress is minimal. Pupils receive two hours a week of physical education and have the opportunity to learn French from Reception through to Year 6. Well planned trips, visits and theme days enliven the taught curriculum and these have a positive impact on pupils' personal development. The Black History month, anti-bullying week, African sculpture day and French day all enable pupils to reflect and to deepen their understanding of other people and cultures. The school does well to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities despite the lack of a school field. Activities such as dance, judo, cheer leading, juggling, fencing and chess give pupils an opportunity to be involved with activities that benefit their personal well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Academic guidance is satisfactory. All pupils have targets, usually in English and mathematics, but pupils are not always clear as to what their target is. They are also unsure as to how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work or to meet their targets. Teachers' early identification of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. They construct an individual education plan or a support plan to cater for these individual pupils' needs. Not all parents and pupils are involved in this process or in the process of reviews. Intervention systems to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are satisfactory.

Pastoral guidance and support are good. Pupils benefit from good systems to welcome children into the school and to transfer between the Reception class and Key Stage 1. Parents are supportive of the school and the care given by adults in the school. There are good quality systems and policies to maintain health and safety. Procedures for the vetting of adults to safeguard pupils meet current government guidelines.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher sets a clear direction for this inclusive school. She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher. Senior leaders and subject leaders self-evaluate and monitor the school's effectiveness regularly by scrutinising pupils' work, teachers' planning and assessment data; by collating the views of pupils and by observing teaching. However, this monitoring is not always rigorous or helpful enough to have an impact on teaching and learning. Tracking systems are good and leaders are able to identify individuals who are making insufficient progress. Although governors challenge the school, they are not all sufficiently knowledgeable about achievement and standards or about self-evaluation to have an accurate view of the school. The school improvement plan identifies and prioritises some of the school's main weaknesses. Priorities, objectives and success criteria are often not sharp enough to be able to evaluate accurately how successful initiatives have been. The school had a deficit budget in the last financial year and this is likely to be the same this year. The headteacher, despite budget

difficulties, manages the deployment of staff to ensure the smooth running of the school. Value for money is satisfactory.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is 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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the 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?	3

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?	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	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Manchester, M41 5TJ

As you know, I came to your school recently, with Mrs Auton, to find out how well you are learning. Everyone made us feel welcome and helped us to find out about your school. It was good to see so many of you using the playground equipment at break times and it was good to speak to members of the school council and playground squad. You are all a credit to the school, well behaved, polite and sensible.

Your school is satisfactory overall and there are some things that the school does well. Provision for the youngest pupils in the Reception class is outstanding and the teaching that you receive in Years 1 and 2 is good. We have asked the school to find ways of improving teaching and learning in Key Stage 2. We looked at all of the jobs that you have in school and how you contribute to the community and we judged this to be outstanding.

To make your school even better, we have asked the staff and governors to:

- find ways of increasing the proportion who reach Level 5 by the end of Year 6
- enable you to know how well you are doing in your work and what you need to do to improve
- find new ways of using targets in order to raise standards.

I am sure that you will help with ideas of your own about how to improve the school.

You have our very best wishes for the future. We hope you continue enjoying school and that you do as well as you can at St Mary's and when you move on to secondary school.