

Ince St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106447
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	324401
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Angela Westington HMI

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 controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	187
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 M Thornton
Headteacher	Mrs G Talbot
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Derby Street Spring View Wigan Lancashire WN3 4TJ
Telephone number	01942 866416
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Mary's is a smaller than average sized primary school that serves an area of social disadvantage. A third of the pupils are eligible for free school meals; this is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to the national figure, although the number with a statement of special educational need is higher. Almost all pupils are of White British backgrounds. A very few are from minority ethnic heritages and one is at the early stages of learning English. The school currently has a very small number of asylum seeker and refugee pupils.

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 happy school. It provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and has some good features. The relatively new headteacher has gained the full support of staff, governors and parents and her strong leadership and vision for the school are driving improvement in many areas. Other managers are beginning to develop their leadership roles, but currently much of this work falls on the shoulders of the headteacher. Consequently, leadership and management overall are satisfactory. Nevertheless, the school knows itself well; its evaluation of its work is highly accurate and accorded with the views of the inspection team in almost every area.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy school and feel safe and secure. They make a good contribution to their community and are developing a good knowledge of workplace skills. Pupils are well looked after; the school's provision for their care, guidance and support is good.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but it is very variable. It varies from year group to year group and across subjects. As a result, pupils' progress in lessons is erratic. Over time, they make satisfactory progress, but this masks inadequate progress in some areas and good progress elsewhere. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

This variability is evident in the standards of pupils' work, in their books and in national test results. Standards overall are broadly average, although standards in science and in reading are not as good as they should be.

The school's curriculum is satisfactory. There are some gaps in the provision which the school has identified. A new curriculum plan is due to be introduced in the summer term.

Governance is satisfactory but governors have not yet met the statutory requirements to ensure the school promotes community cohesion.

The school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

On entry to the Reception class, pupils display a wide range of attainment but overall their skills are below those typically expected for their age; they are particularly low in communication, language and literacy. Throughout the Reception Year, children achieve satisfactorily, but by the end of the year standards are still below those typically attained by children of the same age nationally. Their skills in speaking and early reading and writing improve during the year but far fewer children reach the levels expected in this area of learning than nationally. Whilst children's standards in personal, social and emotional development and problem solving, reasoning and numeracy remain below average, their progress is generally quicker in these areas.

The children come into school happily. They gain a good sense of security through the friendly and supportive relationships with the staff and the established class routines. They behave very well and play sociably with each other in class and at playtimes. The children are learning how to keep healthy, for example, by washing their hands after using the toilet and eagerly choosing fruit and raw carrots to eat at snack time. They are very proud to be chosen as helpers and enjoy the opportunities they have to make choices about their work.

Focused teaching sessions to the whole class reinforce basic skills effectively, for instance, helping children recognise key words, letter sounds and formation, and how books work. Adults work effectively with groups of children to help them master new skills and base assessments of children's progress on regular observations. Although there are regular opportunities for children to engage in play, staff do not use these situations as effectively as they could do to take children's learning forward. Similarly, there are missed opportunities to exploit the learning potential of snack time, which has become a routine rather than a learning experience.

Limitations in the accommodation restrict easy access to the outdoors. Children spend some time almost every day outside, for instance, playing circle games, but there are only two occasions in the week when the full Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is provided outdoors. There is scope to review the organisation of outdoor provision so that children have more frequent opportunities to learn outside the classroom.

Children's welfare is promoted well and safeguarding requirements are fully met. Links with parents are good and staff have a clear understanding of the individual needs of the children. Where additional support is required, outside agencies are involved and staff implement specialist programmes to ensure vulnerable children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included. Good transition arrangements into school and later to Year 1 ensure the children feel safe, supported and able to build effectively on their earlier learning. There is no liaison with staff who run the breakfast club attended by some Early Years Foundation Stage children to ensure appropriate links between classroom provision and support and that provided by the breakfast club. However, the range of resources provided in the breakfast club is appropriate to Early Years Foundation Stage children. Staff in the breakfast club also interact very well with the children and ensure that they feel safe and enjoy their time there.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. There are appropriate priorities to improve the programme for teaching children about letter and sounds. There is scope for further improvement in other areas, such as outdoor provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Widen the school's focus on raising standards in English to include improving pupils' progress in, and enjoyment of, reading across the three Key Stages.
- Raise standards and achievement in science.
- Improve the proportion of good and outstanding teaching.
- Satisfy the statutory responsibility to promote community cohesion.

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

Standards are broadly average overall and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

Results in national tests in recent years, in Key Stage 1, have shown steady improvements towards the national average apart from a dip in 2007. In 2008, reading was the weakest of the three subjects, mainly because no pupil gained the higher level.

In Key Stage 2, in three of the past six years the school's results have been below the national average. However, the school and Local Authority's unvalidated data for 2008 show that the

results improved considerably, bringing them closer to the national average. Science and reading remain areas for further improvement.

This picture is reflected in the work seen in pupils' books and in lessons. In Upper Key Stage 2 and in Year 1, the standard of pupils' work is good but elsewhere, it is variable. Standards in science are low; the result of gaps in the science curriculum and insufficient attention in lessons to developing pupils' investigative skills. There are gaps in pupils' mathematical skills and knowledge also, particularly for pupils in Years 2 and 3. The school had already identified shortcomings in pupils' mathematical knowledge and enlisted the support of the local authority consultants to conduct an audit of pupils' work and the provision for teaching the subject. As a result, the school now has a detailed plan of action to improve the teaching of the subject and raise standards.

During the past year, the school has focused on improving the standard of pupils' writing and this work is paying dividends. Generally, pupils' writing is improving and this is especially evident in pupils' books in Years 1, 5 and 6. However, reading results are still not as high as they should be, especially for some boys in Key Stage 2 and pupils in Key Stage 1. Too many pupils do not enjoy reading. Although they acquire a good range of skills to enable them to read satisfactorily, few read extensively or for pleasure.

The school has put in place sharper procedures to identify pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their areas of need. It has invested in a range of resources, predominantly information and communication technology (ICT) based, to support these pupils. As a result, they make satisfactory progress overall and in some cases, progress is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils develop well in this area and their overall, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Cultural development is satisfactory, with pupils gaining an adequate understanding of peoples' differences and beliefs.

Pupils have good knowledge of how to keep healthy, recognising the need for healthy foods, a balanced diet and exercise. They are particularly enthusiastic about the extra-curricular sports opportunities, including specialist coaching and use of various local sports venues.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They get on well with the school's staff and say that they feel able to turn to them for help should the need arise. Pupils have gained a very good understanding of ways to keep themselves safe, referring to road safety, stranger danger, safe use of the internet and electrical equipment to avoid the risk of fire at home. They say that, although there is some bullying at school, this is rare and point out that the school tells them all about bullying and what to do if they see it or if it happens to them.

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. The school's review and subsequent implementation of a new behaviour policy is having an impact, and staff, parents and pupils have noted improvements to behaviour. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and a good sense of moral development. However, whilst the majority of pupils behave well in lessons, there is still a minority whose behaviour falls short of the expected standard, which can disrupt learning and make lessons less enjoyable for others. Where pupils find lessons interesting they behave very well and are keen to learn. Conversely, when pupils are not motivated or enthused by the content and organisation of lessons some resort to 'low-level' misbehaviour that slows the pace of their own and others' learning.

Pupils learn the importance of making a contribution to their community and do this well. Their good contribution is seen in the work of the school and class councils. The school council has raised funds to enhance the play area and make considered decisions about the various charities they will support and the activities they can do to raise funds. They are very proud of the work they do to help improve the lives of children in an orphanage in Kenya. Pupils are keen to take on roles of responsibility, such as play leaders, cloakroom and dinner monitors and carry these out sensibly. They say that they have thoroughly enjoyed being involved in projects such as the formulation of the school travel plan and enterprise activities, including bidding for funding for their playground design. These experiences, pupils' good awareness of social issues and broadly average standards in basic skills help prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but it is highly variable. It ranges from teaching that is good with some outstanding features to some that is inadequate. The challenge for the school is to get more of the teaching up to the standard of the best. The best teaching observed shared certain features: strong teacher subject knowledge; high expectations of what the pupils could achieve; and sharp assessment of pupils' learning during the lesson, paying close attention to correcting their errors and misunderstandings. In contrast, the weaker teaching exhibited less secure skill in managing time and pupils' behaviour, and checking pupils' understanding and progress. Where the teaching was less effective, inspectors observed instances of inattention or low level disruptive behaviour.

The school has an extensive system to track pupils' progress and, in the better lessons observed, this information was used well to set work that was appropriately matched to pupils' needs. However, this was not true in all cases. Similarly, the marking of pupils' books is variable; some is thorough and provides clear guidance for improvement but some is cursory and offers little in the way of practical support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. It is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities, which include sports, the arts, ICT and reading. Visits and visitors are very popular with pupils who recognise that these add good interest to their learning and make it more enjoyable. A modern foreign language is introduced at Key Stage 2 and pupils say that they really enjoy this. There are also strengths in the provision to promote pupils' personal development, through programmes that enable them to discuss moral and social issues, such as drugs and relationships.

The curriculum devotes a significant amount of time to developing the key skills of literacy and numeracy. However, use of curriculum time and the organisation of subjects throughout the week are not always effective. Planned time is not adhered to on occasions, resulting in a loss of learning time. Timetables also show too little variation in the subjects pupils follow throughout each day, resulting in a loss of enthusiasm for learning and some negative attitudes, for example, to reading and writing. The school has already recognised the need to review its curriculum and is well on the way to implementing the revised version in the summer term. Staff have particularly identified the need to improve provision in science and inspection evidence confirms

that the provision for this core subject is weak in some parts, particularly in developing pupils' investigative skills.

ICT provision has recently been improved and the use of ICT is developing satisfactorily.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There are many strengths in the quality of pastoral care and guidance. Staff have an in-depth knowledge of pupils as individuals and are extremely responsive to their social and emotional needs.

Pupils' with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have detailed work and behaviour programmes with small-step targets for them to achieve. They and their parents are involved in the process of forming these targets and evaluating progress towards them. Support staff play a particularly good role in helping these and other vulnerable pupils to access the curriculum by supporting them in class and in delivering specialist work programmes. There are very good links with outside agencies to support pupils with particular needs in their learning and emotional development.

Specialist support is provided for pupils who do not speak English as their first language. Support staff continue the specially designed work programmes for these pupils between visits and, as a result, pupils make good progress in learning to speak English.

Pupils' attendance and punctuality are monitored and promoted carefully resulting in rates that are in line with the national average. The school offers a good range of rewards that pupils are keen to receive and rigorously follows up on pupils whose attendance falls below 90%.

The school works hard to forge links with parents. The headteacher is ever ready to speak to and help parents in any way she can. The school provides and hosts a number of workshops to help parents support their children's learning and welfare.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. More rigorous use of data about pupils' progress has led to the setting of clear learning targets for all pupils. Pupils have varying levels of awareness of these and involvement in evaluating their own progress. Marking and pupils' reading logs sometimes provide useful pointers to tell pupils how to improve, but this practice is not consistently effective throughout the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall.

The headteacher's leadership and management are good. She provides strong direction for staff and is steering the school well. Other managers report being relatively new to leadership roles and are developing these with the guidance and support of the headteacher. Morale is high and there is strong commitment to the drive for improvement. The school's self-evaluation is particularly good; inspectors agreed with almost all aspects of the school's evaluation of its work.

The school's development plans are thorough and focused on appropriate priorities. The headteacher is particularly effective in identifying areas for improvement and seeking out support and guidance from local authority partners. The school has set suitably challenging

targets. It works well with a number of external partners and it has good links with the community it serves.

Governance is satisfactory, although the school has yet to respond to newer statutory duties regarding community cohesion. Governors are committed to the school but they do not yet fulfil their role as a 'critical friend'. At the time of this inspection, all current government requirements in respect of safeguarding were met. Risk assessments are up to date and the school has clear policies to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils.

The breakfast club is operated and managed by the school. It is well organised and satisfies current requirements.

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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	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	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

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	4
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**

As you know, Mrs D'Arcy and I visited your school recently. We would like to thank you for talking to us and making us feel so welcome. We looked at many of the things you do in school and talked with many of you, your teachers and some of the people who help you. We could tell that you and your families are very proud of your school, and so you should be. Here are some of the things we liked about your school:

- Your school is a happy school. The teachers and adults work hard to make sure that you are safe and well.
- You are growing up to be good, sensible young people and the school does its best to help you in this. You are learning some useful skills and thinking about jobs in the adult world such as 'being a brickie'. We really liked the brick plant containers that some of you built. Well done! J
- You know how to be healthy and keep safe. You told us you enjoy the sports on offer and the trips you go on.
- Your headteacher is a good headteacher and she knows what needs to be done to make your school even better.

We have asked your headteacher and the teachers to look again at how reading and science are taught because we think more of you could do better in these subjects and we think you could enjoy them, especially reading, much more. We have also asked them to try to make all the lessons as good and interesting as the best ones that we saw. We have asked the governors of your school to make sure that some important paper work and plans are put in place so that you can all find out more about the different communities in our country.

We are sure that you will continue to work hard and will help your headteacher and the teachers when they start to make the changes that are needed. We really enjoyed our time at St Mary's. Thank you for making our two days so special.