

# St Mary's RC Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105953
<b>Local Authority</b>	Salford
<b>Inspection number</b>	336592
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 September 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sarah Drake

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

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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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	240
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Deborah Henley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Julie Forshaw
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 December 2006
<b>School address</b>	Hemming Drive Eccles Manchester M30 0FJ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, the School Improvement Partner and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documents related to a wide range of areas such as whole-school policies, assessment and safeguarding, as well as scrutinising pupils' work. Inspectors also took account of the opinions of staff, pupils, and parents and carers as provided in the inspection questionnaires and through speaking directly with a small number of parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The achievement in English of more-able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- How effectively teachers use assessment to ensure that work is suitably adapted to pupils' different needs and that pupils know what to do in order to improve their work
- How effectively it promotes equal opportunities, safeguarding and community cohesion with particular regard to the school's context
- The school's capacity to improve, given that the senior management and chair of governors are all in an acting capacity.

## Information about the school

St Mary's school is situated close to Eccles town centre and is of average size. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, live in the vicinity and come from a variety of backgrounds. Broadly average numbers belong to a wide range of minority ethnic groups but a below average proportion speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible to receive free school meals is slightly below average. Broadly average numbers have special education needs and/or disabilities. The Early Years Foundation Stage caters for children full time in a Nursery and a Reception class. The school operates an out-of-school club throughout the year. The acting headteacher took up her post in September 2009, having previously been the school's deputy headteacher. Other senior leaders, including the chair of governors, are also currently in an acting capacity. Three new teaching staff joined the school at the beginning of this term. The school has recently achieved the Activemark and the Bronze Eco award.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

### Main findings

St Mary's is a good school. From the time they join the Nursery to when they leave, pupils behave outstandingly well, thoroughly enjoy their time at school, and achieve well. This is because staff provide pupils with the good-quality teaching, care and guidance that encourage them to want to learn more, try hard and to grow in self-confidence. A particular area of strength is the outstanding provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities which enables the overwhelming majority of them to achieve exceptionally well.

It is a tribute to the professionalism and commitment of all involved that the many changes of personnel over recent months have had no visible impact on the standards that pupils achieve. Children's skills on entry to the Nursery are broadly as expected for their age. In response to good-quality provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the attainment of the great majority of children by the end of Reception is average or above in all areas of learning. Pupils' good progress continues in Key Stages 1 and 2 so that standards are consistently above average at the end of both key stages although historically the proportion achieving the higher levels has been broadly average. The school has responded very effectively to the area of improvement identified at the last inspection, to raise standards in mathematics. A well above average proportion of pupils are now working at the higher levels in this subject. Standards in science and reading are now also well above average but in writing the levels achieved, particularly by boys, are only average.

The lively curriculum ensures that pupils find learning interesting and develop many impressive skills. For example, older pupils have recently composed and recorded a sound track to accompany their animated film 'Can you Imagine?' However, opportunities are sometimes missed to encourage pupils to practise their writing skills across a range of subjects. Good-quality teaching also helps pupils to sustain their concentration well, and strong relationships between adults and pupils create a very positive working atmosphere in classrooms. The school uses effectively the information gained from the assessment systems which have been developed over the past year, to ensure that teachers generally give pupils suitable levels of challenge in lessons. Teachers regularly mark pupils' work but they are not always sufficiently precise about pinpointing exactly what pupils should do next in order to improve.

Good-quality leadership and management are ensuring that morale throughout the school is high despite so many senior posts not yet being confirmed. Parents, carers, staff and governors are unanimous in expressing their confidence in the acting headteacher. A buzz of excitement and optimism for the future pervades the school with staff at all levels reviewing its provision and taking responsibility for different aspects of

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its work. However, until very recently, too few members of the governing body have been fully aware of the requirements of their post. Many have been insufficiently well informed to be able to take a proper role in holding the school to account. This is now changing and governors are becoming clear about their duties. They are united with the school staff in their vision for providing pupils with the very best education, and they are determined to develop their expertise so that they can fulfil their responsibilities to a high level. Currently, statutory requirements are met but the capacity for the school to improve, given the number of personnel in acting posts and weaknesses in the governing body, is satisfactory.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise standards in writing by:
  - increasing the proportion of boys who gain the higher levels expected for their age
  - extending creative opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills across a range of different subjects
  - ensuring that teachers give pupils suitably specific guidance on how to improve their work.
- Ensure that all governors are fully aware of all their statutory responsibilities and are sufficiently well informed to enable them to fulfil their role in driving forward improvement and holding the school to account.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Throughout the school, pupils make good progress because they develop good attitudes towards learning. Their books demonstrate that they take pride in the presentation of their efforts and in producing a good amount of work during the time allowed. Last year's Key Stage 2 work shows that progress was stronger in Years 5 and 6 than in the earlier year groups. In lessons, pupils listen well to their teachers and are very helpful to each other so that sessions can move at a good pace. Pupils mostly apply themselves diligently, although some younger pupils, particularly boys, do need reminders to encourage them to put pencil to paper and remain on task. From an early age, pupils develop good learning skills, such as reference to displays or dictionaries when stuck for inspiration, and checking over their work. As they grow older, pupils increasingly reflect on the lesson to establish how confident they are in their new knowledge and what they need to concentrate on next.

Such good learning habits underpin the consistently above average standards that pupils achieve. For example, Year 5 pupils swiftly negotiated the internet to add to their research about Tudor kings, fully aware that some of the available information is opinion rather than fact. Year 6 pupils showed mature skills, and took great delight, in developing open-ended questions to find out from their partner which imaginary character the partner had adopted. In this lesson, as elsewhere through the school, the

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well-briefed teaching assistant provided excellent support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities which enabled them to take full part in the sophisticated task. By the end of Year 6, the majority of such pupils attain standards that are close to the national average for all pupils, having made excellent progress from their starting points.

Pupils' personal development is as strong as their academic standards. They are friendly, confident and outgoing, showing a good social awareness and concern for others. Pupils happily take on responsibilities and they have a strong moral sense. For example, one volunteered that the point of donating at harvest time is 'to make sure that our world is fair'. Pupils' excellent behaviour means that they are polite, tolerant and act in such a manner as to keep themselves and others safe. They play energetically at break times and are keen participators in sports activities, but not all make healthy choices when it comes to the food they bring from home. A real strength is pupils' understanding of their own and others' cultures, for example through the arts and links with other schools locally and also further afield in France and Kenya. Pupils' mature personal development and very good relationships ensure that the school acts as a cohesive, orderly community. Comments such as: 'I think my school is a happy place. We think of each other,' encapsulate the atmosphere well.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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## How effective is the provision?

Careful planning, well-structured lessons and high-quality support from teaching assistants for all pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, combine to ensure that teaching is never less than satisfactory and is often good or outstanding. Considerable changes in staffing over recent years have led to some inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of pupils and skilfulness in making the best use of time but, generally, teaching successfully keeps pupils motivated and eager to learn. All teachers are very keen to improve their practice and staff are happy to share their skills and ideas. Teachers plan lessons to cater for those of different ability, based on information about their prior attainment and ongoing assessment of their previous work. However, in the classroom this does not always translate into exactly the correct level of challenge for every pupil. Teachers give clear explanations and use questioning well to confirm pupils' understanding and encourage them to think about their work. Some maintain an excellent pace throughout lessons and make very good use of time towards the end to consolidate pupils' learning. They all move well around classrooms, ensuring that pupils remain engaged in their tasks, but they vary in the precision with which they offer guidance both orally and when marking, particularly about ways to improve standards in writing.

An interesting curriculum, with use of outside expertise in areas such as sports, music and French, ensures that pupils enjoy their learning and cover all areas to a good standard. The school offers pupils many memorable experiences, such as participation in dance and musical events with professional performers, which help them develop a thirst for finding out more and broadening their horizons. Fruitful partnerships with specialist support services for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities underpin the excellent provision for such pupils. This is based on detailed identification of their specific needs, skilled support, regular monitoring of their progress and close liaison with parents and carers.

All staff develop warm relationships with pupils which mean that they are happy to voice any concerns, confident that they will be taken seriously. Good arrangements ease the transition from year to year and on to secondary school so that pupils develop the self-confidence to face new challenges positively. The school also provides high-quality support for pupils and families who are experiencing difficulties. Parents and pupils alike greatly appreciate the out-of-school club which offers good-quality care in an interesting and supportive environment.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>

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<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>
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## How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection, the school has successfully raised standards under the purposeful leadership of senior staff. Over the past year a significant minority of pupils made the equivalent of two years' progress. Many made strong strides forward in reading, which equips them with high-level skills through which to access all other areas of the curriculum. The current leadership is determined and well equipped to build on previous success and to involve all those associated with the school in achieving further success. Increasing opportunities to share ideas are creating an exciting sense of dynamism and teamwork. All subject leaders are rapidly developing real ownership of their areas of responsibility. Class teachers are becoming more skilful in their use of the high-quality information about pupils' progress which the tracking system can provide, and school leaders use this information to set challenging targets for pupils which many exceed.

The school's determination to cater for individuals' needs, and especially to support the more vulnerable, means that all are fully included in all aspects of its work and given equal opportunity to succeed. It has a good understanding of its distinctive characteristics and reaches out to both its immediate community and, even more effectively, to global communities. This helps pupils develop a strong awareness of their place in the world and understanding of how their actions can have an impact on the environment and other communities. Staff are alert to areas posing potential harm to pupils and are effective in dealing with them. Procedures for recruitment and in daily practice ensure that pupils feel safe and are suitably safeguarded both personally and physically. However, in this area as well as others, governors' role has not in the past been sufficiently well informed or rigorous in detail. For example, although the school does reach out globally beyond its gates, the leadership has not monitored the impact of its procedures to promote community cohesion.

Good progress has been made in developing a cohesive team whose vision for the school is shared with staff. Governors' understanding of their role is developing but is not yet sufficiently firmly based on knowledge of educational requirements and practices for them to be able fully to carry out their role of critical friend to the school.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>



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<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

### Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a really good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, rapidly settling in the bright, supportive environment that offers them exciting activities to explore both inside and outdoors. Staff's good liaison with families, including use of their skills and knowledge to bring children's learning to life, ensures that everyone is aware of important information which helps them to cater well for each child's individual needs. Impressively, although over one third of last year's Reception children speak English as an additional language, after two years at the school the skills of all children were average or above in communication, language and literacy, with particular strengths in linking letters to sounds. Children's personal and social skills also develop well as they learn to share, try out new activities and maintain concentration and a joy in learning. Staff carefully observe children and discuss their progress on a daily basis, using the information to adapt their planning. A simple, highly effective system for recording children's interests leads to creative incorporation of these across all areas of learning, thereby guaranteeing children's participation and enthusiasm. However, the encouragement of early writing skills is not always made as enticing as other areas. The system to track children's progress is effective and currently being developed to be even more useful. Leadership and management of the provision's new team is reflective, inclusive and ever seeking to improve. All adults work extremely well together. They skilfully balance fun, joining in with children, asking open-ended questions and encouraging independence so that children's learning progresses at a good rate.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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## **Views of parents and carers**

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are pleased with the school's work. Of those who added comments to the questionnaire, many expressed particular pleasure in the quality of the current leadership, especially the way in which parents' and carers' opinions and concerns are now sought and acted on. A few parents and carers felt that their children were not offered sufficient challenge; inspectors find that levels of challenge are increasing although there is still some way to go, with writing in particular. Others comment, accurately, that there has been an unusually high turnover of staff recently. Overall, parents and carers feel well informed about their children's progress, are very appreciative of the care offered by the out-of-school club and overall consider that the school enables their children 'to blossom'. Inspectors agree with their positive opinions.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's RC Primary to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 240 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	72	29	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	87	78	24	21	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	72	64	39	35	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	67	61	38	35	5	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	79	71	33	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	69	62	40	36	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	79	71	30	27	2	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	67	61	40	37	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	73	66	34	31	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	66	60	41	37	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	66	61	39	36	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	73	69	26	25	3	3	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	77	70	30	27	2	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



Inspection of St Mary's RC Primary School, Eccles, M30 0FJ

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our visit and I am delighted to tell you that we agree with you and your parents that you are lucky enough to go to a good school.

We were impressed by many things but particularly by your excellent behaviour which makes your school a happy place in which to learn and play. We were also pleased to see that you make good progress in your work and consistently reach above average standards for your age. This is because your teachers explain things clearly and you develop really good learning skills, such as concentration and taking a pride in your work. Your teaching assistants are also very helpful and all staff combine to make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve exceptionally well. The school provides lots of interesting things for you to do, such as music, art and film projects. Staff also make sure that children in Reception and Nursery get off to a really good start and understand what fun learning can be. All adults in school take good care of you and help you to feel comfortable and safe.

As you know, there have been quite a lot of changes recently among the staff, senior leaders and also the governors. The leaders are working really hard to make your school even better and have already made a good start on this. They have lots of ideas about what needs to be done but we have also made two suggestions.

- We have asked teachers to help you all, but particularly boys, to raise your standards in writing, so that you achieve as well in this as in other subjects.
- We have also made clear that the governors should become better informed so that they can fully carry out their responsibilities and support the school.

I hope that you all continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now and to work hard so that you can make the most of life and achieve successfully in the future.

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