

St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106344
Local Authority	Trafford
Inspection number	287493
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Margaret Lewis

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	275
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Dyer
Headteacher	Mrs P Masters
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2002
School address	St Mary's Road Sale Cheshire M33 6SA
Telephone number	0161 9735030
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This slightly larger than average school is oversubscribed. It has mixed aged classes in Years 1 and 2. It is in a socially advantaged area but draws some of its pupils from wider social circumstances. Most pupils are White British and none are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning disabilities and/or difficulties. The school holds several awards, including Investors in People, Healthy Schools award, Eco Schools award, Artsmark and Activemark, and several from the local authority.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school gives its pupils an outstanding education in a vibrant, stimulating and welcoming Christian atmosphere. It buzzes with activities in performances, music and art shows. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school life, are happy and thrive. The school is committed to enabling all of its pupils to achieve as well as they can and it succeeds very well in this. As a consequence, they leave the school as well rounded, mature and confident individuals who are in a very good position to make the most of their future education and adult life.

St Mary's is exceptionally well led and managed by an inspirational headteacher who is extremely well supported by senior staff. Governors are very effective and work closely together in supporting and managing the school. Parents are extremely pleased with what the school provides. Many commented upon the high levels of care, how their children thrive and the progress that they make. The school has improved further and moved forward since the last inspection, when it was judged to be outstanding. Quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are excellent. Nursery provision has been built since the last inspection and successfully extends the provision in the Foundation Stage.

The quality of care, guidance and support pupils receive is outstanding. Extremely secure relationships between staff and pupils and a rich curriculum have a strong impact on both personal development and learning. As a result, pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they have excellent attitudes to learning, which helps them achieve outstandingly well.

Children start school with skills that are broadly average for their ages. They make very good progress and by the end of their Reception year nearly all reach and many exceed the standards expected for their age. Pupils continue to make very good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 to reach high standards at the end of Year 6. The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and pupils rise to the challenges they are given in lessons so that their achievement in English, mathematics and science is excellent. First-rate systems to track each pupil's progress means that the school is ready to intervene with specific programmes of work when necessary to ensure that pupils 'bubbling under' their expected progress level are helped to regain ground. The school's very successful commitment to all its pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, shows in the excellent progress that these pupils make, matching that made by others. In this they are helped by highly effective teaching assistants. The school has consistently sustained high standards in results over the past five years and exceeds the challenging targets it sets. However, the school is not only very successful in helping its pupils achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science but is also committed to a rich curriculum so that pupils achieve highly in other subjects such as music, art, history, drama, sport and information and communication technology (ICT).

The school has a very accurate view of its many strengths and what it needs to develop next; staff have the enthusiasm and the skills to continue to be successful. The school has an excellent capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- This outstanding school knows itself very well and is already taking the steps it has identified to make it even better. As a result, no issues for improvement are raised.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children start Nursery with a varying range of skills but these are generally at the levels expected for children their age, although a significant proportion are below average in their social and emotional development and some in their language and literacy development. These youngest pupils settle well and make very good progress through both Nursery and Reception because their individual needs are particularly well met within stimulating surroundings. By the time they leave Reception, most children are working above the expectations for their ages. Building very effectively on this good start, pupils make uniformly very good progress as they move through the school because teachers track their individual progress extremely carefully and have consistently high expectations of what each should achieve. Pupils are quickly identified for additional help if needed. As a result, achievement is outstanding for all groups of pupils. Standards are high by the end of Year 6, with more than half the pupils regularly reaching the higher Level 5 in their national tests. The school exceeded its challenging targets in 2006 and in 2007.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is clearly at the heart of the school's work and contributes overwhelmingly to their outstanding achievement. Pupils love coming to school. They say that the school provides 'fun in learning, fun for life' and this is reflected in the enthusiasm they show for all that it has to offer. Attendance is excellent, as are pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to work. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding. Pupils are extremely polite and friendly and relationships are excellent. The stunning end-of-term performances develop pupils' confidence and enjoyment of learning extremely well. Through the work of the school and Eco councils pupils are fully involved in decision making about their learning and the environment. They are very involved in recycling activities and planning the new garden area for the playground and have recently gained the bronze Eco School award. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities as play leaders and monitors and particularly enjoy helping the younger pupils at lunchtimes. They suggest, plan and organise fundraising events with minimal adult supervision. Their excellent awareness of the wider community is developed through musical performances at local venues and links with a nursery school in Africa. Pupils have a very good understanding of the need to stay safe, fit and healthy and the healthy lunchtime options and many sporting opportunities contribute well to this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Lessons are planned very carefully, with an excellent range of practical activities which really motivates pupils and enables them to achieve as well as they can. Teachers build exceptionally well on pupils' previous learning and time activities precisely so that learning is brisk. Excellent question and answer sessions and discussion effectively develop pupils' thinking as, for example, in a lesson when pupils used a wide range of features to devise their own powerful advertising jingles. Pupils' very positive attitudes to their learning are reflected in their enthusiasm in lessons, the pride they take in the presentation of their work and their eagerness to do well.

Teaching assistants give valuable support to pupils in the mixed-age classes in Key Stage 1 so that these pupils are working at levels relevant to their age and ability. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported very well by all staff, and by outside specialists when necessary, to ensure that they are fully included in all activities. As a result, they make the same rate of progress as their classmates. Assessment information is used very successfully to identify where extra support or challenge is needed. Pupils know their learning targets which, together with teachers' very good marking, clearly tell them what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The rich, varied and outstanding curriculum is adapted extremely well to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers' planning makes successful links between subjects, which together with special themed weeks such as 'Africa Week' make learning more exciting and enjoyable for pupils. Spanish is taught throughout the school. Provision for ICT is very good and pupils use these skills and those of literacy and numeracy extremely well to support their learning in other subjects. Music and the arts are strengths of the school. Pupils' success in these areas is celebrated in the vibrant displays around school and their participation in a wide range of musical events, which has led to the school gaining the Artsmark Silver award. The excellent provision for pupils' personal development ensures that all pupils know how to stay safe, fit and healthy. Physical education is another strength of the curriculum and the school has recently been recredited with the Activemark. The very wide range of out-of-school activities, visits and visitors provides very good opportunities for pupils to extend their learning and develop new skills and talents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school takes extremely good care of its pupils and all the required procedures are firmly in place. Staff are vigilant about risk assessment, and child protection procedures are robust. Staff know the pupils very well and work extremely hard to meet their individual needs. The very effective work of the pastoral support assistant ensures that all pupils, and especially the most vulnerable, have someone to share their problems with and a friendly place to go to when they need time to reflect. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported through their individual educational plans, which set out very clearly how their needs should be met. Procedures for checking on pupils' academic progress are outstanding from the Foundation Stage onwards and underpin pupils' excellent achievement. The school makes very detailed and regular checks on how well each pupil is doing and acts upon these, ensuring that no one slips through the net. Teachers make exceptional use of this information to set suitably challenging targets with the pupils to guide future learning. Pupils understand their targets very well and most importantly are clear about what they need to do to achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The success of the school is founded upon the constant striving of all staff to make things better in all aspects of its work. As a result of excellent leadership and management, the pupils

and staff in this school radiate confidence, happiness and enjoyment in their work. A strongly shared sense of aims and values ensures that pupils are valued and develop highly as individuals.

The enthusiastic and dedicated headteacher is very closely involved with pupils, parents, staff and governors, resulting in high achievement by pupils and excellent personal development. She has built a strong senior management team whose influence, together with subject leaders in their respective areas, is very effective. Pupils' and the school's performance is monitored closely. Pupils are given strong support and interventions are put in place as soon as necessary. Staff constantly look for new ways to raise standards further and there is no complacency. For instance, implementation of the latest reading and writing methods following a slight dip in Key Stage 1 results in 2004 has proved fruitful in making improvements. Monitoring of teachers' performance is rigorous. Teachers are encouraged to move forward and are supported extremely well in their professional development, which helps to produce high quality of teaching and learning. Governors are kept very well informed, and play a major part in the work of the school and in leading its development. The governing body understands the strengths of the school and is constantly evaluating and looking for ways to improve. It is successful in ensuring that the school gives excellent value for money.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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 behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

I am writing to thank you for the warm welcome and the help you gave us when we visited your school for its recent inspection. We enjoyed our visit very much. I would like to share with you the judgements we made about your school.

We think your school is outstanding in all parts of its work and provides you with an excellent education so that you make extremely good progress and reach high standards by the time you leave. Your school cares for you exceptionally well, and you respond very well so that you become mature and confident young people who have every chance to make the most of your education in your next school and in your adult life. Well done to you all!

So why is your school so excellent? Well, your headteacher leads your school exceptionally well. She is extremely well supported by the deputy headteacher, the staff and the governors. She and the teachers know each one of you very well. They know what you are capable of and are determined that you will all succeed. The teachers and teaching assistants teach you extremely well and give you activities which make your learning exciting and memorable. They are determined to make things even better for you and all have a very clear idea of what needs to be done next. You are happy and proud of your school. Many of you told us that school is a happy and fun-filled place to be. You know a lot about keeping healthy and safe and are extremely well behaved and polite to everyone. We liked all that we saw in your school and we think that the headteacher and school staff are doing just what is needed to make it even better. We are sure that you will all play your own part to make sure this happens.

Keep up the first-rate attitudes you have to learning and continue to work hard and enjoy school. Oh, we also hope that the Years 5 and 6 performances of 'The Sound of Music' went as well as the amazing rehearsal that we saw. The acting and the singing were wonderful!

Very best wishes for the future.