

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Clapham

LEA area: Lambeth

Unique reference number: 100636

Headteacher: Mrs Bernadette Brech

Reporting inspector: Theresa Mullane
15138

Dates of inspection: 26th – 28th June 2000

Inspection number: 193713

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Crescent Lane London
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Miss M. Gardner-Brown
Date of previous inspection:	February 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's RC Primary School is a large voluntary aided primary school in the London Borough of Lambeth. There are 370 pupils on the school roll. The school has a nursery that provides part-time education for 46 children. The children's attainment on entry to the school is below average. Most pupils enter the school in the nursery or reception classes and leave at the time of transfer to the secondary school at age 11. Whilst the school receives pupils from a range of social backgrounds, overall their socio-economic circumstances are below average. The school receives additional funding to support pupils with special educational needs. Just over 11 per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is lower than average. This is because the school has a policy of not placing stage 1 pupils on the register of special educational needs if their needs are judged to be transitory and that the school can meet them. Only 5 pupils (1.1 percent) have statements of special educational needs, which is also below average. Over 57 percent of pupils come from ethnic minorities and the predominant countries of origin are in Africa or South America. Over 63 per cent of pupils are learning English as an additional language. The main languages that are spoken, other than English are Yoruba, Portuguese, Spanish and Twi. The school receives additional funding to support pupils learning English as an additional language and 55 per cent of pupils are at an early stage of learning English.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The overall effectiveness of the school is very good. By the end of Key Stage 2, nearly all pupils attain at least average standards in English, mathematics, science and information technology. Good proportions of pupils attain above average levels in English, mathematics and science tests. In music, pupils attain high standards. The results from the Key Stage 2 national tests have shown sustained improvement between 1996-1999. In 1999, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected level for their age was well above average in English and average in science and mathematics. Indications from the results for the Key Stage 2 tests in 2000, show that a much higher proportion of pupils have attained average and above average levels in English, mathematics and science. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and their work. They also make very good progress by the time they leave the school at the age of eleven. The teaching is good and in nearly a third of lessons it is very good and sometimes excellent. The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher has an excellent vision for the school and this, together with the very effective work done by key staff, ensures that the school provides a very good quality of education for the pupils. In particular, the school's provision for music is excellent and plays an important part in the school's drive for high standards. The school has made very good progress since its previous inspection. The day-to-day financial management of the school is very good with planned surpluses being used effectively. Overall, the school is providing very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership and management of the school promote high standards.
- High standards are also due to good teaching.
- Pupils enjoy school and their behaviour is very good.
- The school promotes the pupils' personal development very effectively.
- The school's provision for music is excellent and pupils attain high standards in this subject.

What could be improved

- There are no significant weaknesses in the progress pupils make, or the education provided by St Mary's RC School.
- The only minor issue the school should review is whether too much time is allocated to English and mathematics in some classes.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good progress since its last inspection in 1996. At that time, the inspection team concluded that there were no significant weaknesses in the attainment, progress and education provided at the school. The good standards at Key Stage 1 have been maintained and those at Key Stage 2, have been raised significantly. The previous inspection identified four ways that the good quality of education could be improved. Very good progress has been made in all these areas. The school has developed very effective processes for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning. Effective practices have also been put in place to ensure that good practices are disseminated throughout the school. Provision for information technology has been improved significantly. The subject is taught well and it supports learning across the curriculum effectively. The school has worked hard to improve its communications with the wider community and there is ample evidence that this has been done very effectively using a range of strategies.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	D	B	A	A*
Mathematics	C	C	C	B
Science	B	D	C	A

Key	
Very high in comparison	A*
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C D
Below average	
Well below average	E

At Key Stage 1 results in reading are above average and in writing they are well above average. When the school's results are compared to those achieved by similar schools, they are well above average for reading and very high in writing. The writing results are in the top 5 per cent of their group. During the inspection, high proportions of pupils were also seen to be achieving an average level for their age, with a good number of pupils achieving a higher level. Over the last three years the results in mathematics have declined from very high to average. However, the school has implemented the National Numeracy Strategy and monitored teaching and learning in mathematics very carefully this year. Early indications from this year's tests show a marked improvement in the pupils' test results and a high proportion of pupils were observed attaining average standards or above during the inspection.

Over the last three years, standards achieved in the national tests at Key Stage 2 have shown a steady improvement. The greatest improvement has been in English, where standards have moved from below average to well above average. The school implemented the National Literacy Strategy effectively and this assisted in raising standards in English. The school exceeded its targets for English and mathematics. The school has not been satisfied with its recent results in mathematics, although they have always been at least average. As well as implementing the National Numeracy Strategy, the school worked very hard to identify areas where improvements in teaching and learning could lead to higher standards. Information from the 2000 tests indicates that a very much higher proportion of pupils have achieved the average and above average levels for their age this year.

Whilst standards at Key Stage 1 show slight fluctuation from year-to-year, they are mainly above average in English and average in mathematics. Overall, Key Stage 1 standards are similar to those seen at the time of the last inspection. At Key Stage 2, standards are significantly higher than they were when the school was inspected in 1996.

Pupils make good progress in the nursery and reception classes from below average starting points. In music, pupils attain high standards by the end of Key Stage 2. The more able pupils in this subject attain very high standards in examinations for the musical instruments they study. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress in English and mathematics, as well as music.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The pupils have very good attitudes to school. They work hard and show sustained effort and concentration with their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good at all times. Pupils behave very well in the classrooms, at playtimes and when they are walking around the school without being directly supervised.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good. Relationships at every level in the school are very positive.
Attendance	The school achieves above average rates of attendance and pupils are punctual at the start of the school day.

The pupils' positive attitudes and values are strengths of the school. The school places great emphasis on promoting positive attitudes in its pupils and in encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The teaching in English is good overall. In the reception classes, the teaching of language and literacy is good. Teachers have a good grasp of the National Literacy Strategy and a very secure knowledge of teaching English. Excellent teaching of writing was observed in Year 6. Teaching in mathematics is consistently good and in half the lessons observed it was very good. The school has implemented the National Numeracy Strategy and reviewed all aspects of its provision in this subject. Teaching in music is consistently good and ranged between good and excellent. Two of the main strengths in teaching are the teachers' good subject knowledge and their effective management of pupils. Teachers have very good subject knowledge in subjects such as English, mathematics, music and information technology. Teachers manage their pupils very effectively and this creates a positive atmosphere and a calm working environment in all classrooms. Most lessons are well paced and this helps to maintain the pupils' interest in their work. Teaching meets the needs of all pupils well. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good and the needs of the most able pupils are met well in subjects such as, English, mathematics and music. Overall, the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language are met very well by the school, although in a small number of instances the tasks were not well matched to pupils' needs. In 86 percent of lessons teaching was good or better. In just under a third of lessons, teaching was very good and sometimes excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. The school emphasises the teaching of English, mathematics, science, information technology and music. There are many after school clubs including a good number that promote skills in sports.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special needs is good. Pupils are given appropriate targets and make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils make very good progress despite some variations in the quality of support given. Pupils are given appropriate targets that are monitored carefully by the management of the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The pupils' moral and cultural development is excellent. The school promotes the pupils' spiritual development well and the music curriculum develops this aspect very effectively. The pupils' social development is very good. The school has very good procedures in place to promote pupils' personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Overall, very good procedures are in place to promote the pupils' welfare. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are good.

The school emphasises the teaching of music and makes excellent provision for this subject, both within the school day and in extra-curricular activities. This leads to very high standards of work in this subject. Good provision is made for children who are under-five. Pupils' learning is extended beyond their lessons well by the large number of extra-curricular clubs, which the school runs including football, netball, craft and information technology. In a small number of classes, on some days of the week, the time devoted to English and mathematics is too long. This can lead to pupils finding tasks rather repetitive.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	This is very good. The headteacher has an excellent vision for the school and she enjoys the respect of staff, pupils, parents and governors. Senior staff share the leadership and management of the school with the headteacher very effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are very effective. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities very well and provide a valuable level of support for the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is very good. The school has put in place strategies for monitoring and evaluating most aspects of its work. The information is used rigorously to improve standards.
The strategic use of resources	Very good use is made of staff, time, learning resources and of the building. The school uses its resources well. The budget surplus from the previous year has been used well to support improvements in resources for information and communication technology. The school is very aware of the principles of best value.

The headteacher provides strong leadership for the whole school community and she is well supported in this by her deputies and senior staff. They have worked hard to establish a very effective team of committed, hardworking and dedicated staff. The school's ability to review its work critically and constructively in order to improve the quality of education is one of the school's greatest strengths. Senior staff and governors are knowledgeable about the principles of best value and apply them effectively.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are happy at school. • The school has high expectations of their children. • The children make good progress. • The school promotes good behaviour and attitudes in their children. • The teaching is good. • Parents find the school very approachable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant issues of concern were raised by the parents.

The inspection team endorses parents' positive views of the school. Pupils are very happy at school and they work very hard. Teaching is good and the school has high expectations of its pupils. Relationships are very good at every level. This all contributes to the high standards that the school achieves.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The leadership and management of the school promotes high standards

- 1 One of the main reasons why St Mary's School is so successful is that senior staff and governors provide very effective leadership. The headteacher has an excellent vision for the school and she is determined that every child's 'bite of the cherry', will be their opportunity to experience high quality education. This vision has been instrumental in promoting major developments in the school since the previous inspection. The school now has a nursery that contributes very effectively to good provision for pupils under-five. Standards have improved particularly at Key Stage 2 and high standards in music are achieved throughout the school. Provision for information technology has been improved substantially and the subject is taught well.
- 2 Relationships are very good throughout the school and teamwork is an established approach to working for all staff. Responsibilities are delegated well and staff are given good opportunities to take on management roles. This enables senior staff to share the leadership and management role with the headteacher effectively. The school has a good management structure and staff taking on new responsibilities are well supported. They are encouraged to be innovative, both by the headteacher and governors.
- 3 The school has developed an effective culture of self-evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are used very effectively to identify what it is done well and what needs to be improved. The school analyses why a particular practice is effective. This information is then used to help the school to find a way of improving an area where they feel that they should be doing better. A very good example of this is the school's approach to improving standards in mathematics. The school had noted that at the end of Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels was average, whereas a much higher proportion of pupils attained this level and above in English. The school had used a combination of strategies to improve performance in English, including the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. So they adopted similar strategies for mathematics. The school undertook an analysis of last year's mathematics test papers to find areas where pupils were experiencing difficulty. This analysis also helped to identify the language needs that pupils had in learning mathematics. The school used this information to review the provision for mathematics in the school. As well as implementing the National Numeracy Strategy, teachers focused on developing pupils' use of language in mathematics. Teaching and pupils' learning was monitored closely by the senior management team. Initial indications from the Key Stage 2 mathematics tests shows 98 per cent of pupils have achieved Level 4 in mathematics, a rise of 22 percent on the previous year with 48 percent attaining Level 5.
- 4 Training plays an important part in developing all staff professionally. A substantial amount of training focuses on sharpening teachers' teaching techniques, as well as providing development for those undertaking specific management roles. Last year the school obtained the Investors In People Award.
- 5 The Governing Body is very effective and supports the school well in its work. Governors monitor and evaluate the work of the school very carefully and this enables them to have a good oversight of developments and to act as critical friends. Planning for change is systematic and based on a thorough evaluation of where the school is and how it needs to develop. Last year senior staff and governors identified that the school could possibly achieve higher standards in mathematics. Governors encourage and support the school as it seeks to achieve even higher standards. The governors are fully involved in the target setting and review procedures in the school. All staff with management responsibilities meet with a group of governors once a year to review what has been achieved in an area they manage and to set new targets for their work. This is a supportive process. Whilst staff are encouraged to be ambitious in setting targets, governors are supportive if unforeseen difficulties arise which limit success.

High standards are also due to good teaching

- 6 In the 1999 national tests at Key Stage 1, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected levels for their age in reading and writing was above average. In mathematics, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels was average. When these results are compared to those achieved by schools with similar characteristics, they are above average in mathematics, well above average in reading and high in writing.

- 7 At Key Stage 2, the results for English have shown a steady improvement since 1997 and in 1999 they were well above average. The proportion of pupils achieving at the higher levels in English is also above average. These results are very high compared to those achieved by similar schools. Over the past three years, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in mathematics has been average. In science, results have fluctuated, but in 1999 the number of pupils attaining the expected level was average. In both mathematics and science when the school's results are compared to those achieved by similar schools, the results are above average (for mathematics) and well above average (for science). Early indications from the Key Stage 2 tests for 2000, show that even higher standards have been achieved, with all pupils attaining the expected level in science and 69 percent achieving at a higher level. In mathematics there has been a 22 percent rise in the proportion of pupils achieving the average level with 48 percent achieving at a higher level.
- 8 The work seen during the inspection reflects the good standards being achieved in the national tests. Teaching is challenging in most classes and this promotes good quality learning. The school ensures that pupils who have English as an additional language are supported effectively and gain access to the whole curriculum. However, in a small number of instances, the tasks given to pupils learning English as an additional language were not well matched to their needs. Appropriately challenging targets are set for pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language, and the school monitors pupils' progress towards their targets carefully. Good provision is made for pupils of all levels of attainment, particularly in English, mathematics and music.
- 9 Pupils develop good skills in English. Teachers promote literacy and language across the curriculum. In many lessons teachers help and encourage pupils to speak and to express their ideas using the vocabulary of the subject they are studying. Pupils are given the opportunities to work in groups, where they have to discuss their ideas with one another. This all helps to promote fluency and accuracy in the pupils' spoken language. They read well and older pupils use reference skills effectively. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils' ability to respond to literature is developed systematically. High standards in writing are achieved throughout the school. In the nursery, children learn to form their letters with increasing accuracy and by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are knowledgeable about the characteristics of different forms of writing.
- 10 Good teaching is promoting steadily improving standards in the school. Teachers manage their pupils very effectively and this creates a positive atmosphere and a calm working environment in all classrooms. In many subjects, teachers have good subject knowledge and this leads them to being very clear about what they want pupils to learn and to structuring pupils' learning well. In most classes the pace of work is good and teachers have high expectations of the pupils. Teachers use questions particularly well to develop pupils' ability to express their ideas and to prompt them to extend their thinking. In a Year 6 English lesson, the teacher's questions about a text the whole class was reading enabled pupils to identify the techniques that an author used to keep readers interested in a story. The discussion that followed from these observations helped pupils to suggest how the techniques used by the author could be applied to their own writing. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, a teacher working with a lower ability group used questions very effectively to help pupils to identify patterns in the six times table. She then used this experience to help pupils start to describe the patterns they saw emerging in the nine times table. In both lessons, the teachers combined questioning, explanations and demonstrations skilfully in order to develop pupils' understanding.
- 11 Teachers plan their lessons well. Lessons are well structured and activities are well chosen to motivate pupils and to develop their understanding. Teachers use their on-going assessment of pupils' progress effectively to match tasks to pupils needs. For example, in a Year 3 music lesson the teacher was encouraging pupils to sing on their own. Pupils were taking turns to sing their 'lemonade' song. The teacher knew the note that each child needed to start on and by pitching the song correctly, all the pupils singing solo did so with confidence and in tune.
- 12 Resources are selected with care and help to motivate pupils. In a Year 5 class, a teacher was demonstrating to pupils that sound is created by vibrations. To demonstrate this, the teacher used a number of musical instruments and pupils were interested in trying to explain how sound can be altered by varying the way an instrument vibrates. Time is used effectively in most classes and teachers set deadlines for tasks to be completed. This encourages pupils to focus on their work and helps to keep up the pace of learning. In some classes, the pace of work slows during the long English and mathematics sessions. Although teachers plan a range of activities well, the tasks sometimes become a little repetitive and consequently the pupils' interest wanes towards the end of the lesson. Homework is used very effectively to help pupils to practise and consolidate the learning that takes place in school. The routine of homework is established in the nursery. Children have books that they share with their parents and handwriting practice, which helps them to practise using a pencil. Those who are ready start to practise forming their letters correctly. By Year 6, pupils undertake homework regularly and are given a good range of work that helps to consolidate their learning in a range of subjects. The vast majority of parents are very satisfied with the school's arrangements for homework.

- 13 Teachers make learning interesting and provide pupils with tasks that are demanding. This helps pupils tackle their work with confidence and enthusiasm. Teachers are very supportive when pupils make mistakes, or find new work difficult. This encourages pupils to tackle new work with confidence. At the start of each session, teachers explain to the pupils what the main focus of their work is going to be. This not only clarifies the teachers' expectations for the pupils, but during the lesson it also helps pupils to explain where they feel they are having difficulties in their learning.

The pupils enjoy school, and their behaviour is very good

- 14 Pupils have very good attitudes to school and this is a significant factor in the school's success. Parents confirm that their children are very happy at school. Pupils arrive cheerfully and promptly at the beginning of the school day. There is an evident culture of learning in the school and pupils are happy to work hard. Pupils are very interested in what they learn and talk with enthusiasm about their work in a range of subjects, including music and information technology. Many pupils are enthusiastic in participating in the extra-curricular clubs. A large number of pupils are involved in music activities, but many also attend other clubs the school runs, such as those for sport or those that develop skills in information technology. Pupils listen well to teachers and to one another. They are keen to answer teachers' questions and to show what they know. They have the skills to adapt to different types of working arrangements being equally able to work co-operatively in groups or independently on their own.
- 15 Pupils work hard and try to do their best. This helps pupils to make good progress and was a feature of all lessons observed. Pupils work co-operatively and share resources well. This was a feature of pupils' work in many lessons and particularly enabled pupils to make good progress in information technology. In these lessons, pupils shared the computers well and helped each other in a supportive way. This meant that pupils with greater knowledge helped others to develop new skills. During a Year 6 music lesson, pupils made sure that no one was left out when they were dividing into groups of eight. They were also very good humoured and co-operative as they moved from group to group, practising a figure of eight movement. By the end of the lesson, the pupils had learned a new dance with a complex movement. The pupils' ability to work co-operatively contributes to the positive atmosphere in all classes and supports their learning well.
- 16 Behaviour in lessons is very good and often excellent. Parents believe that the school promotes discipline well and that standards of behaviour are high in the school. The school has effective strategies for promoting good behaviour and pupils respond to these positively. The school manages activities where pupils are prone to become restless very well. When entering the hall for assemblies, instead of listening silently to music, teachers help pupils to respond to the music by clapping, gestures or by counting a number of bars before they join in. Whilst singing hymns, pupils have actions that go with different words, which also helps them to think about what they are singing. The behaviour of pupils around the school is very good. They come in and out of school at break times in an orderly way and arrive promptly for their lessons. They move between groups for English and mathematics sensibly so that very little time is lost. Pupils are courteous and trustworthy. They are very friendly to visitors, checking that they are not lost and are confident and enthusiastic when they talk about their work.

The school promotes the pupils' personal development very effectively

- 17 The school regards the pupils' personal development as a high priority. One of the main features of the school's religious education curriculum is its strong focus on their personal development. The school also consciously promotes the pupils' personal development across the curriculum. The teacher's planning often includes a focus on personal goals for the pupils as well as academic ones. The pupils' personal development is also enhanced by the way the school promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions of the pupils' education.
- 18 The school promotes the pupils' spiritual development well. They are given good opportunities to reflect and express their ideas in English. In music pupils are given very good opportunities to reflect and express their ideas creatively through playing instruments, singing and dancing. However, some opportunities were missed in an art lesson, where the restrictive tasks set tend to limit pupils' creativity.
- 19 Pupils have an excellent understanding of their moral responsibilities. The school makes clear its expectations of good behaviour and does this by building on values such as honesty, fairness and respect for others. Pupils of all ages understand the school's rules and can explain why it is important that everyone keeps them. Pupils know right from wrong, but the school also works with pupils to enable them to develop the concepts of forgiveness and tolerance.

- 20 The school has very effective procedures for promoting the pupils' social development. Racial harmony in the school is exemplary. Pupils and staff get on well with one another and this contributes to the positive atmosphere in the school. In the nursery, children settle quickly and adapt to the routines of the day. They behave very well and show an interest in all the activities they are offered. They are helped to consider how they should help and care for others. Toys, such as the toy wheelchair have been purchased so that the children will start to think about how they can help to care for others. Pupils' awareness of other people's needs is also reflected in the way they share resources, such as computers or make sure that no one is left out when groups are formed for dancing. The school has made links with a local hospice. Pupils do much to raise funds to support it, as well as visiting to sing and entertain the patients.
- 21 The pupils' cultural development is excellent. Pupils learn about the traditions and customs of English and western European society through poetry, literature, singing, dancing and art work. The time given to French conversation and the awareness that many pupils' first language is Portuguese or Spanish helps to promote a broader understanding of European culture. The school has a wide variety of artefacts and books that celebrate and reflect the school's diverse culture. The school values all the pupils' languages and seeks to employ some staff that can speak these languages, in order to emphasise the value they place on them. The religious education curriculum has been developed to include appropriate study of other faiths and cultures. Through the music curriculum, the pupils learn to sing, dance and play instruments of all the cultures present in the school. Recently, musicians and dancers from Ghana worked with each class. Pupils learnt African dances as well as learning how to improvise and play accompaniments on a number of different types of drums. The music curriculum, in particular, helps pupils of all cultures to have a sense of pride in their own traditions. It also enables pupils to value and respect the traditions of others.

The school's provision for music is excellent and pupils attain high standards in this subject

- 22 The school makes excellent provision for music. The curriculum for music is very broad and the school provides a wide range of musical activities, which leads to pupils achieving high standards in singing, choir and instrumental work. All classes have one music lesson a week, that is taught or supported by a music specialist. A large number of pupils are involved in the musical activities that form part of the school's extra-curricular provision. Over half the junior pupils are involved in the school's choirs, recorder ensemble or the school orchestra. Last year, the junior choir took part in the 'Music for Youth' regional festival and was invited to perform at the National Festival at the South Bank, receiving a 'highly commended' award. This year the choir's performance was described as 'outstanding' and as a result, they have been chosen to perform at the Royal Albert Hall in November.
- 23 Many pupils are given opportunities to play instruments. The school subsidises instrumental tuition fees in order to enable large numbers of pupils to have lessons with peripatetic music teachers. Pupils are encouraged to take the Associated Board examinations for the instruments they play and whilst many achieve the early grades, the more able pupils are challenged so that they reach Grade 4 or Grade 5 by the time they leave the school. Music plays an important part in many aspects of school life, including assemblies and worship. A particular feature of the music provision in the school is the close links that are made with dance. All class music lessons have an element that focuses on dance, as this is seen as an important way of developing pupils' awareness of rhythm.
- 24 By the age of seven, pupils attain above average standards in music and have made good progress. They sing with a good sense of pitch, clear diction and sweet intonation. Many pupils can sing on their own in tune with clear diction as well. Pupils enjoy singing in their music lessons and in assembly. They have a good sense of rhythm and maintain a steady beat, whilst playing instruments to accompany songs they sing or can count the beats of a dance they are learning. They respond to music well and whilst listening to music before an assembly they were able to count the bars before they had to respond with clapping or gestures.
- 25 By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils attain high standards in music. They make very good progress in their learning and this is promoted in their music lessons, choir and instrumental work. In their music lessons, pupils describe the contrasting pieces of music played by classmates (who were taking the opportunity to perform their examination pieces before an audience), using terms such as legato and staccato. They are skilled in using solfa and the associated hand signs, which develops the pupils' awareness of pitch and their ability to discriminate between intervals. In their dancing, pupils demonstrate a very good sense of rhythm and used it to good effect in learning a complicated figure of eight dance movement. The pupils sing a wide variety of folk songs with clear diction and intonation and can harmonise simple tunes in three parts. The school's senior choir made up of pupils from Years 5 and 6, develops the pupils' ability to sing in two and three parts further. At the time of the inspection this choir was preparing to enter the Associate Board initial grade examination in Choral Singing.

- 26 Over a hundred pupils attend the junior choir and orchestra. At the time of the inspection pupils were preparing for the National Festival of Music for Youth. They were rehearsing 'A Festival Piece' which took the theme of 'jubilee' and linked together songs and dances from the pupils' home cultures. The pupils composed part of the score and instrumental players improvised some of the accompaniments. Whilst the pupils' performance demonstrated a high degree of musical skills, it was the way that they sang, played and danced with such a sense of joy and confidence, that made it a deeply moving and spiritual experience for all concerned.
- 27 The music curriculum sets out to make an important contribution to pupils' personal development. It seeks to encourage pupils to engage in musical activities, where they learn to play or sing confidently on their own or as part of a group. Whilst lessons are planned with a focus on developing musical skills, there are also targets that are aimed at the pupils' personal development such as 'not dominating the group' or 'co-operating with others'. The music curriculum makes an excellent contribution to the pupils' cultural development. The cultural traditions of the school are reflected in the songs and dances the pupils learn and the instrumental accompaniments they compose. Whilst this helps all pupils to learn about and value other cultures, it also enables pupils from minority groups to have a real sense of pride and confidence in their own traditions.
- 28 Teaching in music is consistently good. Class teaching was mainly very good and in one choir session was excellent. Teachers communicate a tremendous sense of enthusiasm for this subject and this inspires pupils. Lessons move at a very challenging pace and this means that pupils have little opportunity to be bored or restless. The teachers' very good subject knowledge ensures that learning is structured carefully and that activities are chosen that not only motivate pupils, but will also deepen their understanding of the subject. Teaching in one choir session was excellent and this was reflected not only in the way pupils sang, but also in the way those playing accompaniments improvised. One pupil, playing a woodwind instrument, was heard to comment to another playing an instrument 'you did it differently today', to which the other shrugged and responded 'just felt like it'. Teachers of musical instruments show considerable skill in the way they question, demonstrate and explain their instruments. They communicate an enthusiasm for the instruments that they are teaching, which encourages young pupils to work at playing them.
- 29 The school has excellent resources for music and they are used fully. There is a good allocation of time for class music so that a well-structured scheme of work can be taught throughout the school. Class music is supplemented by very good provision for extra-curricular clubs and peripatetic teaching. In addition to this, the school uses opportunities such as assembly and times of worship, to extend the pupils' music experience further as well.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

30. There are no significant weaknesses in the progress pupils make, or education provided by St Mary's RC School.
31. The only minor issue the school should consider is whether time allocations for English and mathematics need to be reconsidered in some classes. In a small number of classes, the English and mathematics lessons are too long. In some classes, the work in English lasts for an hour and then is extended into literacy work in the information technology suite. This provides a good balance of work and activities for the pupils. However, in other classes, time for individual reading is followed by a literacy hour. This sometimes leads to pupils being given tasks that are repetitive. On mornings where there is no assembly, the additional time is used to extend the mathematics lessons. Again, this can lead to a lack of variety in activities that pupils are offered and slows the normally good pace that is evident in the majority of lessons observed in the school. The school has identified that it needs to review time allocated to subjects, as they implement Curriculum 2000.
1. The school should review whether too much time is allocated to English and mathematics in some classes.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Information and Communication Technology

32. The school is committed to further raising educational standards through the use of information and communications technology. The provision for this subject has improved substantially since the school's previous inspection. The school has recently refurbished its computer suite and installed fifteen new computers. The budget surpluses, together with other grants have been used to finance this development. All the computers are networked and have Internet access. The school development plan shows that over the next three years, the school systematically intends to upgrade or replace existing computers in classrooms and to link them to the school's network. The school is also involved in the National Grid for Learning and the Integrated Learning Systems initiative.
33. During the inspection two lessons were observed at Key Stage 1 and one at Key Stage 2. In all lessons, pupils' attainment was judged as being on course to be above the national expectation by the end of the key stage. Pupils in Year 1 could log on to the computer with confidence, experiment with a graph format and print their work. In their discussions they could discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the different formats they had used. Pupils in Year 4, keyed in logo commands confidently, used technical language correctly and manipulated shapes using a mouse to see whether or not they tessellated.
34. In all lessons that were seen, pupils demonstrated good, mature attitudes to their work. They followed instructions well, tackled their work confidently and worked at a good pace. They worked very co-operatively, sharing the keyboards well, but also helping one another when this was needed. The pupils enjoyed the tasks they were given and this helped them to concentrate well.
35. Teaching was good in all the lessons that were seen. Teachers made clear their expectations of pupils and this helped them to focus on the tasks. Teachers teach this subject confidently and demonstrate good subject knowledge in their teaching. They use technological vocabulary well and demonstrate good skills in using computers. This is mirrored in the pupils' responses. They tackle their work confidently and use technological language in their responses to the teachers' questions and in their discussions with other pupils.
36. The school has a clear strategy for developing this subject. All staff have received training to develop their computer skills. They consider that the training was of a good quality and that it enabled them to teach the subject confidently. All year groups try to ensure that effective links between literacy and numeracy are established. The co-ordinator assists all year groups with their planning and monitors teaching and the pupils' learning. The overall planning, development and management of the subject is very good.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	23
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	8

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	23	50	18	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	24	323
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	88

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	32

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	219

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	4.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	20	27	47

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	18	20
	Girls	25	25	26
	Total	42	43	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (89)	91(89)	98 (98)
	National	82 (81)	83 (85)	87 (86)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	18	18
	Girls	25	26	26
	Total	43	44	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (89)	94 (84)	94 (98)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	19	26	45

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	17	18
	Girls	22	17	23
	Total	40	34	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	89 (72)	76 (56)	91 (69)
	National	70 (65)	69 (65)	78 (72)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	17	18
	Girls	19	19	23
	Total	35	36	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (72)	82 (69)	91 (62)
	National	68 (65)	69 (69)	75 (72)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	17
Black – African heritage	95
Black – other	31
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	118
Any other minority ethnic group	8

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.21
Average class size	26.9

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	8.00
Total aggregate hours worked per week	144

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	1: 24

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	98

Number of pupils per FTE adult	1:8
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
	£
Total income	1 037 413
Total expenditure	995 544
Expenditure per pupil	2 920
Balance brought forward from previous year	128 043
Balance carried forward to next year	169 912

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

370

Number of questionnaires returned

180

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	84	15	0	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	78	21	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	75	23	0	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	69	22	5	2	1
The teaching is good.	81	18	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	63	31	5	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	22	1	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	86	13	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	71	25	1	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	86	13	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	80	18	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	62	23	8	2	4