

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S C of E (VA) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Sale

LEA area: Trafford

Unique reference number: 106344

Headteacher: Mrs P Masters

Reporting inspector: Dr B Blundell
23868

Dates of inspection: 26th – 27th June 2002

Inspection number: 250206

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Voluntary Aided
School category:	Primary
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	St Mary's Road Sale Cheshire
Postcode:	M33 6SA
Telephone number:	(0161) 912 3070
Fax number:	(0161) 912 3659
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Dyer
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
23868	Dr B Blundell	Registered inspector
19430	Mr T Hall	Lay inspector
29261	Mrs P Ward	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd
7 Hill Street
Bristol
BS1 5RW

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	8 - 10
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	10
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	10
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	11 - 14

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School is a Beacon school for boys and girls, aged 4 to 11, situated in Sale, Cheshire. There are 248 pupils on roll; the school is similar in size to most other primary schools. The ethnic background of the pupils is largely white with UK heritage, with a small number of pupils being Chinese, Pakistani, Indian, white with European heritage or white with other heritages. No pupils are at an early stage in the acquisition of English. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is well below the national average, and the proportion of pupils identified within the school as having special needs is below average. The nature of pupils' special needs includes specific learning and speech difficulties. Pupil mobility is relatively low. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average overall.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The overall effectiveness of the school is excellent; standards in English, mathematics and science for pupils aged eleven are consistently well above national averages. The overall quality of teaching is excellent and leadership and management are excellent. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards by the end of Year 6 are consistently well above national averages in English, mathematics and science.
- Leadership and management by the headteacher and senior management team are excellent; the school has an extremely clear educational direction.
- Overall standards of teaching are excellent; nothing is left to chance, resulting in excellent learning.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent; relationships are also excellent and this again contributes most positively to pupils' rapid rate of learning.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

What could be improved

- No issues were identified.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March, 1998. Standards in English, mathematics, science, history, information and communication technology and art and design for pupils aged eleven have improved since the time of the last inspection; in other subjects, design and technology, music and physical education, standards have been maintained. Standards in geography now meet national expectations, rather than exceeding them. The overall quality of teaching has improved very considerably indeed. The key issue to establish consistent and effective arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress has been well addressed. Reading records effectively record pupils' development. More opportunities have been provided for pupils to develop their research skills. The school development plan has improved well. The role of the subject managers has been appropriately developed. The headteacher's leadership has improved from good to excellent. There is still a budget surplus, but much of this has been prioritised for much needed roof repairs; the surplus at the last inspection, which was largely used up in the building of the new information and communication technology (ICT) suite, has reduced appropriately. The school brochure complies with statutory requirements. St Mary's has an excellent capacity to succeed further. It has improved very well since the last inspection.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A	A*	A	A
mathematics	B	A*	A	A
science	A	A*	A	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Standards attained by pupils aged eleven in 2001 were well above national averages in English, mathematics and science. Compared to the results in schools of a similar type, results were also well above average in all three subjects. Over the last three years, pupils have left the school approximately one year ahead of pupils nationally in English, mathematics and science.

Standards attained by pupils aged seven in 2001 were well above the national averages in reading and writing and very high in mathematics, being in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Compared to schools of a similar type, pupils' attainment was also well above average in reading and writing, and very high in mathematics. Over the three years from 1999 to 2001 taken together, pupils have left the infant phase with standards one year ahead of pupils nationally in reading, two terms ahead in writing and one year ahead in mathematics. The school's targets are appropriately ambitious.

In the work seen during the inspection, standards for pupils aged seven were well above national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics, and above national expectations in science. Standards for eleven year olds in English, mathematics and science were well above national expectations; in history, art and design, information and communication technology and music standards were above national expectations. For pupils aged seven and eleven, standards in design and technology, physical education and geography met national expectations. Seven year olds met national expectations in history, art and design and information and communication technology. Children aged five are on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals. (The Early Learning Goals are the nationally expected standards for children at the end of the Foundation Stage.) Pupils' achievement is very good overall. Standards at this school are sufficiently high.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes to the school are excellent. Pupils greatly enjoy school; they are most interested and attentive in their lessons. They <i>want</i> to learn. Pupils present their work in an exemplary manner throughout the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour in and out of the classrooms is excellent. There is an absence of oppressive behaviour. Pupils get on extremely well with one another; they help each other and are very friendly.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is excellent; relationships are also excellent. Teachers and other adults treat pupils with great respect. This is mirrored in the way in which pupils regard their teachers, and makes a significant impact on the rate at which pupils learn.
Attendance	Pupils' attendance rate is very high. Rates of unauthorised absence are

	below average.
--	----------------

Pupils want to come to school. They are very happy, well-rounded individuals.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent

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 overall quality of teaching throughout this school is excellent. Particular strengths in teaching include teachers' high expectations, planning for lessons and class management, which are all excellent. Teachers share the purpose of each lesson with pupils very carefully, so that they know exactly what they should be learning. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is excellent; the skills of literacy and numeracy are taught extremely well. The school meets the needs of all pupils very well indeed. Particular strengths in pupils' learning include their interest, concentration and pace of working. They are highly aware of their own learning, because at the end of lessons teachers assess with the pupils how far the purpose of the lesson has been achieved.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of the curriculum are very good. The curriculum is suitably enhanced with a good range of activities that take place out of lesson time.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Not applicable.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good. The school has a very caring atmosphere. Assemblies are suitably spiritual occasions, and are accompanied by vibrant singing.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares very well for its pupils. Child protection procedures are appropriately in place.

Particular strengths in the curricular opportunities offered to pupils include the provision for literacy and numeracy. All areas of the curriculum meet statutory requirements. A particular strength in the way the school cares for its pupils is the way in which it assesses pupils' work and is tracking their progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior management team are excellent. The headteacher is the driving force behind the success of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities very well. They bring a wide range of expertise to the running of this school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's evaluation of its performance is excellent. Results of national tests are comprehensively analysed by the subject managers; the outcome of the analyses is spread to all teachers so that they know exactly which areas need additional emphasis in their teaching.
The strategic use of resources	The strategic use of resources is excellent. The school uses its resources to maximise pupils' learning.

The school benefits from an exceptionally clean and well-maintained environment; this helps pupils' attitudes to school and is a credit to the caretaker and cleaners. Lunchtime staff take care of pupils well and make the midday break a happy occasion, so that pupils come back to class refreshed and ready for work! The two school secretaries ensure the smooth running of the daily routines of the school. A particular strength in the leadership and management by the headteacher is her attention to detail; because of this, difficulties in school are minimised so that all concerned can get on with the main function of the school, which is pupils' learning. The school spends its money wisely.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is well led and managed. • Teaching is good. • Their children like school. • Children make good progress. • The school sets high expectations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents would like to see a greater range of activities outside lessons.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views; it finds the range of extra-curricular activities to be good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards by the end of Year 6 are consistently well above national averages in English, mathematics and science.

1. Over the three years from 1999 to 2001 taken together, pupils have left the junior phase approximately three terms ahead of pupils nationally in English, mathematics and science. In the work seen during the inspection, standards in English, mathematics and science were all well above national expectations for pupils aged eleven; a significant number of pupils in the current Year 6 have been entered for Level 6 in the national tests. (Note: Level 4 is the nationally expected level).
2. In English, standards for pupils currently aged eleven are well above national expectations; standards for pupils aged seven are also well above national expectations in reading and writing. Pupils in Year 6 realise that poets manipulate words for multiple layers of meaning. They write poetry to a standard well above national expectations. Pupils aged seven have very good reading strategies; they use phonic skills appropriately to help them read unfamiliar words. They write stories based on nursery rhymes for their brothers or sisters, and assess how much they like them. Year 4 pupils realise as part of their work, that adverbs differ in intensity. Throughout the school, in their written work, pupils pay very great attention to handwriting and presentation. They speak with great clarity and confidence.
3. Standards in mathematics are well above national expectations for pupils currently aged eleven; they are also well above national expectations for pupils currently aged seven. Pupils aged seven solve mathematical problems competently and recognise simple patterns. They investigate the results of adding even / odd numbers, write statements about their findings, and test them. These pupils create their own methods of recording their results. Year 6 pupils substitute numbers into algebraic formulae such as $n(n-1)/2$ or $2n^* - 2n + 1$ (where $*$ = 2 or 3) and calculate the results accurately. They have a thorough understanding of the use of brackets. The school has responded well to the issue in the last report to provide more opportunities for research and problem solving.
4. In science, attainment is well above national expectations by the end of the junior phase and above expectations at the end of the infant phase. Year 6 pupils carry out exemplary work in experiments such as, "How does the material that seeds are growing in affect the rate of germination?" very successfully. They record the results of experiments in a thoroughly professional and scientific manner. Pupils aged seven classify materials according to their properties methodically.
5. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. The provision for special educational needs is very good throughout the school. Individual education plans have tightly focused targets. Both this group of pupils and the higher-attaining, gifted and talented pupils benefit from the school's provision. The latter are regularly entered for level 6.

Leadership and management by the headteacher and senior management team are excellent; the school has an extremely clear educational direction.

6. This school is extremely well led in both academic and pastoral spheres. The school has a superb learning atmosphere and an air of great friendliness. The headteacher and senior management team are excellent leaders. They lead by example. The headteacher pays very great attention to detail, and this ensures that the school runs most efficiently. Leadership has improved from good at the last inspection, to excellent.
7. The school has a very clear educational direction; there is no complacency. The school's aims, which are re-visited annually, are clearly manifested in the life of the school. The school development plan is a useful working document, to which all staff contribute. Financial planning is

excellent and appropriately supports the school's priorities. Specific grants are well used for their appropriate purposes.

8. The governing body is very effective in giving firm direction to the school. It understands the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well. The governing body has a wide range of expertise. Governors regularly visit the school, observing the delivery of the curriculum and helping in class. The governing body fulfils its role appropriately, and all statutory requirements are met.
9. The headteacher has carried out extremely effective monitoring of all classes, for both literacy and numeracy. She does this on a rolling programme of visits, both regular and unannounced. Teachers have all been provided with very detailed written and verbal feedback. In this school, teachers are delighted to share identified good practice. The subject managers monitor teaching and planning appropriately.

Overall standards of teaching are excellent; nothing is left to chance, resulting in excellent learning.

10. The overall quality of teaching is outstanding, in all areas of the school. In the lessons seen during the inspection, 60 per cent were excellent, 27 per cent were very good and 13 per cent were good. The quality of teaching has greatly improved since the last inspection, in no small part due to the very effective monitoring. The features that made the best lessons excellent were the teachers' very high expectations, a brisk and appropriate pace, first class planning coupled with an enthusiasm for the subject that was communicated effectively to pupils. In such lessons, the teachers made the learning objectives transparent so that pupils were left in no doubt as to *why* they were in the lesson; these objectives were thoroughly re-visited at the end of lessons to see how far they had been achieved, and subsequent lesson plans modified accordingly. Teachers and classroom support assistants work well together and, in some classes, there are written plans for the support assistant as well as the teacher.
11. In an excellent music lesson for children in the Reception class, the teacher set a very high and appropriate level of challenge in using rhythmic phrases to create a composition. She instructed very knowledgeably and maintained attention, using expressions such as, "The ones doing it best have their eyes glued to me"! This lesson resulted in excellent learning.
12. In an excellent information and communication technology (ICT) lesson for pupils in Year 6, the teacher instructed pupils most knowledgeably in how to adapt programmes to control fairground rides using ICT. The lesson was meticulously planned, resulting in pupils being able to write programmes, make predictions, control variables and test their ideas. Pupils were not thwarted when beset with problems that in real life could have decapitated passengers. They appreciate that ICT is used to control the most up-to-date rides. Again, this lesson resulted in excellent learning, with pupils attaining standards above national expectations.
13. Excellent lessons were seen in the Foundation Stage and in the infant and junior phases during the inspection. Every teacher in the school delivered at least one very good lesson.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent; relationships are also excellent and this again contributes most positively to pupils' rapid rate of learning.

14. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school, as evidenced by the exceptionally high levels of attendance. They have a real thirst for learning. In class, they pay rapt attention to their teachers. In a Year 2 ICT lesson, they showed thorough enjoyment of the subject as they designed graphics for the cover of their work on "Birds in the City". They wanted to learn as much as they possibly could about the different techniques open to them. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to work are quite exemplary. The manner in which they present their work is among the very best that this inspector has ever seen. Pupils are very thoughtful and are diligent in wiping their feet as they come off the playground into school. Such seemingly minor detail is what makes this school flourish.

15. Pupils behave extremely well. Older pupils help younger ones in the dining hall, for example, where they serve food to the younger ones before they have their own lunch. Older pupils read to the infants when they arrive in school. They have many opportunities for their own personal development, take their roles as playground mediators very seriously, and actively promote ideas in the School Council that are taken “on board” by the senior management team. A recent example of this is their worthwhile input into the school’s behaviour policy.
16. Relationships both between pupils and with the adults in school are excellent. Teachers and other adults treat pupils with great respect. Pupils throughout the school mirror this respect in their high regard for the adults.

Provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

17. This aspect of the school’s work has improved since the last inspection, from being good to very good. Pupils’ spiritual development is very well provided for. Assemblies are effective corporate acts of worship. Pupils sing with gusto. They study faiths from around the world, and are aware of the multicultural nature of our country. They sing songs from other cultures with enjoyment. Artwork around school is of a high standard and promotes pupils’ cultural awareness very well. The school choir is very active in the locality. The school provides very well for pupils’ social and moral development. They are encouraged to work co-operatively in sport and in lessons, and the school is very successful in its expectations. This results in a very happy working school, where all are committed to the highest standards.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The inspection team did not identify any areas.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

No areas were identified.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	30
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	18	8	4	0	0	0	0
Percentage	60	27	13	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than three percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	248
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	15

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	2.5

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1

National comparative data	5.6
---------------------------	-----

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 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	26	9

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	25	24	25
	Girls	9	9	9
	Total	34	33	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (100)	94 (94)	97 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	25	26
	Girls	9	9	9
	Total	33	34	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (100)	97 (94)	100 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	21	16

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	20	21	21
	Girls	15	14	16
	Total	35	35	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	95 (100)	95 (100)	100 (100)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	21	21
	Girls	15	14	15
	Total	36	35	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	97 (97)	95 (94)	97 (100)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	92 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	219
Any other minority ethnic group	6

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.1
Average class size	31

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	47

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	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.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2
	£
Total income	500151
Total expenditure	497930
Expenditure per pupil	2155
Balance brought forward from previous year	13474
Balance carried forward to next year	15695

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	231
Number of questionnaires returned	111

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	32	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	62	34	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	66	29	1	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	51	40	8	0	1
The teaching is good.	68	31	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	42	5	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	30	5	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	22	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	56	42	2	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	79	21	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	32	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	33	23	1	14