



# St Mary's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 111340  
**LEA** Cheshire  
**Inspection number** 278663  
**Inspection dates** 3 May 2006 to 4 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Paul Bamber CfBT Lead Inspector

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Manor Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Middlewich
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Cheshire CW10 9DH
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01606 832164
<b>Number on roll</b>	238	<b>Fax number</b>	01606 832481
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr J Williams
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 November 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr K Powell

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 3 May 2006 - 4 May 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 278663
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

St Mary's serves a wide catchment area and pupils come from a mixed range of backgrounds. There is a lower than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but an average percentage with statements of educational need. There are a number of Traveller children attending the school. The proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average. The school has several awards including Investors in People status, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and it is one of the National Healthy Schools.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that it is good with outstanding features. Pupils make good progress in their learning throughout the school and attain above average standards by Year 6. However, over the last two years more-able pupils have not achieved as well in English as they have in mathematics and science in the Year 6 national tests. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They behave extremely well and enjoy very much their lessons and the wide range of other interesting activities provided for them. The quality of teaching is consistently good and pupils are enthusiastic and responsible learners. The curriculum is good with some outstanding additional activities that greatly enrich pupils' learning. This contributes very effectively to many areas of pupils' academic and personal development. Although standards and achievement are good in the Foundation Stage, the quality of children's provision is somewhat compromised by the lack of a dedicated outside area to enhance Reception children's curriculum even more. The quality of care and support pupils receive is outstanding and underpins the Christian ethos which is a strong feature of the school. The school is well led and managed by a very effective headteacher who is ably supported by a strong senior management team and a knowledgeable and influential governing body. The school's good improvement since the last inspection demonstrates its capacity for further development. It offers good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

Whilst the school acknowledges the following areas for improvement and is currently taking action to address them, it should ensure that:

- more-able pupils reach higher standards in English
- children in Foundation Stage have a well equipped, safe and continuously accessible outside area in which to learn and play.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Children enter the Reception class with broadly average standards and make good progress. This means that they enter Year 1 exceeding the national targets set for them in all areas of their learning. They continue to do well in Years 1 and 2. As a result of a vibrant curriculum and consistently good teaching, pupils progress well through Years 3 to 6. Over the last five years, pupils' performance in the Year 6 national tests has been better, and sometimes much better, than average. However, since 2001, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in English has steadily fallen. The school has recognised this and is taking effective action to address this relative weakness. Indications from the school's assessments of the current Year 6 pupils' attainment point towards a larger proportion reaching Level 5 in English this summer. Such improvement would enable the school to meet the very challenging performance targets it has set for the 2006 national tests. Vulnerable pupils, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the Traveller children

achieve well as a result of well focused and sensitive support. Those pupils who use English as an additional language make good progress. Particularly strong features of pupils' achievement throughout the school are their speaking and listening skills and their grasp of basic French.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The pupils are enthusiastic, work hard and thoroughly enjoy their lessons. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary and pupils very willingly accept responsibility and are cheerful, polite and helpful. The school council has been very influential in bringing improvements to school life. These include the provision of games equipment for use at playtime and the provision of a 'buddy' area.

Pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have high self-esteem and are very confident. Pupils are involved in the wider community through their involvement with the local town council. They gain a very good knowledge and understanding of world religions and cultures through their religious education lessons and a very wide range of visits out of and visitors to the school. Pupils understand very well how to keep safe and healthy. They are actively encouraged to walk or cycle to school. Pupils become very economically aware through their involvement in fundraising for charities, school council projects and their eager participation in the business and young enterprise links with the feeder Catholic High School. Their excellent attendance and good acquisition of basic skills equips them exceptionally well for their future economic well-being.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching is consistently good with some examples of outstanding practice. In the Reception class, teaching is good overall, but adults should provide children with more opportunity to choose activities. In Years 1 to 6, the basic skills of speaking, reading, writing and mathematics are taught very effectively. However, the relatively lower standards achieved in English by more-able pupils indicate that until very recently teaching for these pupils has not been challenging enough. Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently and creatively in their everyday teaching. This makes lessons exciting and as a result, pupils show interest and enthusiasm in their learning. Because relationships and behaviour management are so good, lessons are positive and productive with pupils behaving extremely well and celebrating their own and others' achievements. Recent, effective training for all staff has resulted in a greater awareness of pupils' preferred learning styles. This means that teachers now use a variety of ways to explain ideas and impart knowledge to pupils to enable them to learn more effectively and to achieve well. Teachers' marking of pupils' work helpfully points out ways in which pupils can improve in all subjects.

Because pupils are confident and sociable they learn very well when they work in pairs or groups. Their ability to sensibly assess their own performance adds significantly to their good quality of learning. The very well qualified staff provide effective and sensitive support for vulnerable pupils. This contributes very well to their good progress.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school judges the curriculum to be outstanding. Whilst this is true for pupils in Years 3 to 6, inspectors consider the curriculum to be good overall. This is because the school does not fully meet the needs of children in the Foundation Stage, in that there is no dedicated outside area for them. In all other aspects the curriculum matches the needs of the pupils well. All statutory requirements are met. The curriculum is greatly enriched through the teaching of French throughout the school and by the many educational visits and workshops held. Residential visits are available to pupils from Years 3 to 6. The many extra-curricular activities available to pupils enable them to enjoy a wide range of sporting activities and creative arts. Through local organisations pupils join in community activities, which include the Folk and Boat, Norman and Roman festivals, art exhibitions and choral singing. The wide range of sporting activities encourages pupils to appreciate and value their physical well-being.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school takes excellent care of all the pupils and ensures that they are safe. Pupils trust staff and know who to turn to if they need help. Parents and carers feel very welcome in the school and are strongly encouraged through parents' meetings and workshops to be involved in their children's education. The pupils say they feel safe in school. The rare instances of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively by the staff. Pupils rightly say that the arrangements for preparing them for their transfer to secondary school are good and they particularly like the opportunities they have to discuss their worries. Child protection and health and safety procedures are very well established and there are very good links with outside agencies, that give a range of help to the pupils. There are very clear and very effective strategies in place for the early identification of children who may be in need of additional support and for tracking pupils' academic progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is very well led by a strong headteacher. He has worked very successfully to create and maintain a most positive and inclusive ethos that underpins pupils' good achievements and some outstanding provision. He is ably supported by senior staff and an effective governing body. Together they are very aware of the school's strengths and performance. They are also aware that some work remains to be done to strengthen the curriculum in the Foundation Stage and to raise standards in English even further.

The school is rightly extremely well thought of in the community and highly valued by parents. The school constantly looks outward towards the wider community, forging close links and partnerships with schools locally and globally. Such foresight contributes significantly to pupils' outstanding personal development and good academic progress. Whilst taking effective and strong action to enhance the school's accommodation and resources, there is still no dedicated outside area for the Reception children. This is because governors have chosen to address other important priorities before dealing with this issue. The school has improved well since the last inspection, especially with regard to standards in science and in promoting the use of ICT as a learning tool across the whole curriculum. There is good capacity to improve even further.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Children

Thank you for making us so welcome during the days we spent in your school. We really appreciated the open way in which you chatted to us and let us know so many interesting things about your school. We would like to share with you those things we thought were really good about your school and those things we felt it could be a little bit better.

What we liked most about your school:

- you behave extremely well and pay good attention to your teachers and are kind to one another
- you speak very well in lessons and in assemblies
- many of you are very helpful around the school and are willing to take responsibilities in and out of the classroom
- there are many interesting activities provided for you in the clubs, visits and residential experiences
- you make good progress in your work because of your good teachers
- there is a very friendly, peaceful atmosphere in the school
- you learn skills that will help you when you move to secondary school
- that the school is well run.

Although we think your school is good there are a couple of things that we feel would make it even better:

- some of the very quick learners could do better in English
- there should be a special outside area in which the children in the Reception class can learn and play.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. We hope that you continue to really enjoy school and do very well with your work and carry on trying really hard.