



St Mary's Church of England Aided Primary School, Prestwich

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105342
Local Authority Bury
Inspection number 287203
Inspection dates 4–5 October 2006
Reporting inspector Sonja Oyen HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Rectory Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Prestwich, Manchester
Age range of pupils	3–11		Lancashire M25 1BP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 7733794
Number on roll (school)	198	Fax number	0161 7737307
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs C East
		Headteacher	Miss Goldsmith
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 4–5 October 2006	Inspection number 287203
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report 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.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This average sized primary school serves the parish of St Mary's but many children travel from other areas to attend. Relatively few children are eligible for free school meals. Twenty two children are from minority ethnic groups and 12 have English as an additional language. None requires support in learning to speak English. The number of children identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Two children have a statement of special educational need. Nine children attend the Nursery full time, and 19 others on a part time basis.

From September the deputy headteacher has been the acting headteacher and the local authority has arranged for an experienced headteacher to support the school as a consultant headteacher. Late in the summer term of 2006 the local authority co-opted an additional governor and the diocese co-opted two foundation governors to the governing body. Three teachers hold temporary contracts.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Despite this judgement, there are indications that the school is well placed to begin the necessary improvements. Not least are the commitment and resolve of the new governing body, the acting headteacher and all staff to bring the school back to how it was a few years ago. Staff commented that, after two years during which they felt unable to move on, morale has now risen and they 'can see the way forward'. They have the support of the parents although a significant proportion of those who returned questionnaires voiced justifiable concerns about aspects of the school's work.

Since the previous inspection in 2002, the school has had varied fortune. Standards were high in 2003 but have since dipped year on year to broadly average. Children in the Nursery and Reception years get off to a sound start. Although nearly all children attain the level expected for their age at 7 and many do at 11, very few do better. Given that most children start school with knowledge and skills typical for their age, the school is adding little value, especially at Key Stage 2. Too many pupils, often the girls, are underachieving. This is because the school does not meet the children's needs well enough: the school is not using to best advantage what it knows about the children's attainment and progress to inform what it provides. For example, the school is not making systematic use of national programmes to boost the learning of those children who fall behind in reading, writing and mathematics. Although the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory lessons often lack vitality and pace to drive on learning. Not all the teachers expect enough of the children's behaviour and their academic achievement. Children from different year groups commented that they could work harder and the more able wished they had challenging things to do rather than more of the same as everyone else.

The children's positive, accepting attitude has helped to mask their underachievement. The children enjoy school and particularly like the extra activities with opportunities to go out into the community. All look forward to the trip to London in Year 6. For the most part the children are well mannered and well behaved but there are inconsistencies in how the adults manage them. Children from the school council talked maturely about how they wanted to resolve the boredom that often led to problems on the playground. While the school retains a good feeling of being a caring family, and the children say they feel safe and secure, there are cracks in how policies are followed and how procedures carried out. The school accepts that there are bridges to build in its communication and links with parents.

St Mary's lags behind many primaries and nurseries in the quality of its environment, range of resources and breadth of experiences for children. Too little focus has been placed on raising standards, and managers have missed out on crucial professional

development particularly in the last two years. Key managers lack the depth of expertise needed to plan, lead and evaluate the impact of improvement programmes. As a result the quality of school leadership and governance is inadequate. A legacy of lapsed systems and gaps in information underlies the current difficulty for the acting headteacher and newly elected chair of governors in piecing together a picture of the school's performance. As a result the school's self-evaluation is inaccurate and the school has had too rosy a picture of its effectiveness. Although the draft school improvement plan is a useful starting point, as it identifies relevant areas where action is needed, it is not rooted in raising standards. The acting headteacher has been prompt to call on the support of the local authority and the diocese: effective steps have already been taken to strengthen the governing body and to provide training to update knowledge and expertise. This places the school in a better position to start moving forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve children's achievement in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- Strengthen the capacity of governors, the acting headteacher and other managers to check how well the school is doing and to take appropriate action to secure improvement.
- Use information from tracking children's progress and from monitoring the quality of provision to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Children's current work, as well as the test results from 2006, shows standards are broadly average but children's achievement is inadequate. Too many pupils, particularly the more able and those who fall just below average, are not achieving as well as they should because of gaps in the teaching and in the overall provision. The school has not made use of practices that proved effective in the past in boosting achievement.

The school's overall performance in the national tests has fallen steadily over the last three years. Nevertheless, a notable success in 2006 was that all the Year 2 children attained Level 2, as expected for their age, in reading and mathematics, and nearly all did so in writing. In all three subjects the fact that very few attained the higher Level 3 lowered the overall standard. The school fell far short of its targets for the Year 6 children, especially in mathematics, where, as in English and science, too many children did not reach the potential they showed at the end of Year 2.

The pattern of progress is inconsistent and unsatisfactory overall. By the end of the Reception year, most children have made at least satisfactory progress: they do as well as expected for their age and a significant proportion are well on the way to being confident readers, writers and mathematicians. They continue to make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 1 but variable progress at Key Stage 2. An example is that while

Year 5 boys and girls made good progress in reading in their time in Years 3 and 4 the girls did not make as much progress as they should in writing and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school has sustained its strength in this aspect of its work and has judged accurately its good quality. The children are self assured, well mannered and feel part of St Mary's family. Their spiritual, moral and social development is good. Although the children know about different faiths, festivals and aspects of life in other cultures their overall cultural development is satisfactory, as in the previous inspection. Good attendance mirrors the children's enjoyment of school and their willingness to take part in activities, especially in music and sport. Their healthy eating is undermined by the daily sale of crisps in the tuck shop. Older children show an awareness of democratic citizenship through the election of school councillors and applications to be play-leaders. Children said that they feel safe and secure in school. On the two wet days of the inspection, most behaved sensibly although a few became noisy and lively particularly when not directly supervised. School councillors said that occasional bullying incidents were dealt with firmly, but they pinpointed the lack of things to do as a cause of problems in the playground. The children have a strong social conscience: they raise substantial funds for charities and are proud to go out into the community to sing in church or at local supermarkets.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is not as strong as the school believes. It has some strengths, especially in how teachers manage their classes through praise and encouragement, but also some weaker aspects which are a key factor in children's underachievement. Too many lessons lacked dynamism, challenge and a clear sense of purpose with the result that the children's learning was limited. Gaps in teachers' subject knowledge sometimes led to inaccurate teaching. When teachers engaged the children in lively repartee and focussed their attention through practical activities, games or exciting presentations, using the interactive whiteboard, the children worked hard and moved on in their learning. Teaching assistants supported the children well: they prompted and demonstrated but also knew when to pull back. Many are making valuable observations on the children's personal and academic progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Homework and after school activities, especially in music and sport, as well as visits and visitors add to the children's personal and academic development. In the Nursery

and Reception classes the emphasis on learning through play and practical experience indoors and out is limited by the lack of good quality resources. The school is cluttered with stored resources but does not have many of the practical items to promote learning in reading, writing and mathematics that are common in most primary schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The good quality of pastoral care is not balanced by the quality of academic guidance where gaps have a significant bearing on the children's progress and achievement. All required checks, systems and procedures are in place to safeguard the children's wellbeing and the acting headteacher ensured that all staff received update training at the start of this term. The teachers know the children and their families and they build on the school's links with the church to promote Christian values, especially of consideration and care for one another. When asked about personal targets the children referred mostly to targets related to conduct and behaviour. The introduction of targets in writing has given the children a focus but the teachers do not always refer to them well enough in lessons or when they mark the children's work. As a consequence the children are not clear about how they can help themselves to move on. While focussed support for those children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities helps them to achieve their targets, insufficient use is made of national programmes in reading and mathematics to support those children who need to catch up.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Inadequate school leadership and governance underlie the current situation of declining standards and underachievement. With the support of the local authority the school is just beginning to gain a realistic view of its effectiveness and the reasons for its current deficiencies. The acting headteacher was right to point out the generous judgements in the school's self-evaluation submitted at the end of the summer term. Governors and staff are putting the concerns of the past behind them and are keen to move forward but they are dependent on experienced others to guide them, especially in interpreting evidence and data and setting an agenda for change. Key subject leaders, for instance, have a general awareness of what to do to improve the quality of provision but are less certain about standards in their subject throughout the school and how to raise them. As a result, the capacity to make the necessary improvements is inadequate: there is very limited proven experience and expertise in raising achievement. Nevertheless, the steps taken so far this term are paving the way for things to improve.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to see how well you are getting on at St Mary's. We valued seeing you at work, at play and also talking to you about school, what you like and what you think should be different. You were polite, helpful and we could see how proud you are of your school. We agree with you that things could be even better and we know you will do your bit as school councillors in passing on all the children's ideas to help St Mary's to be the best! You told us your views on what could make life in the playground less boring and we hope you will also suggest to governors and Miss Goldsmith what could be done inside school to smarten it up.

Some of you said that you could work harder and we agree. In lessons, most of you tried hard but we did see some of you fiddling about and not doing your best work. While some of you did well last school year, others did not learn enough. We have asked the governors, Miss Goldsmith and your teachers to work together to help you to learn better and to excel in reading, writing, mathematics and science. We are sure that you will help them by telling them what makes lessons interesting and what helps you to learn.

We have also asked the governors to make sure that they, Miss Goldsmith and your teachers get training and support from other schools to help them to decide what they need to do to make St Mary's a really exciting place where everyone does well. As part of this we want your teachers to look closely at how well you are doing, to make sure that your targets are challenging and also to make sure that you are all given work that makes you think!