

# St Mary's C of E Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112323
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	310854
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	George Crowther

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	214
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dr Tim Burnett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sarah Oldroyd
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 October 2003
<b>School address</b>	Kendal Road Kirkby Lonsdale Carnforth Lancashire LA6 2DN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01524 271334
<b>Fax number</b>	01524 271334

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This average sized primary school serves a wide area because it is situated in a small rural town and many pupils travel from surrounding villages. Its social context is more favourable than most schools and very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. Children's standards when they start school are typical for their ages. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds and none is at the early stages of learning English. The school has an Active Mark award for its commitment to sport, and a local authority award for good practice in the Foundation Stage.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Mary's is a good school. It is a happy, industrious place where the pupils enjoy their education. The staff pursue the school's Christian values to create a very positive environment for learning where pupils achieve well in both their academic and personal skills. Most parents say the school is doing a good job. The new headteacher is determined to sustain strengths in the way the school nurtures its children whilst promoting an even sharper focus on improving their achievement. She has good support from the staff and governors. As a result of these strengths, pupils achieve well and, by Year 6, are confident, articulate and very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Children get off to a good start to school in the Nursery and Reception classes. In Key Stages 1 and 2, they continue to make good progress. At the end of Year 2 standards are significantly above average, especially in reading and mathematics; writing skills are not so strong. Standards in the current Year 6 are significantly above average and particularly strong in reading. Lessons are interesting and the quality of teaching is good, which helps pupils to build their skills quickly and make good progress. Occasionally, teaching lacks the pace and challenge to enable pupils to make as much progress as they could.

Pupils gain great enjoyment from school and talk enthusiastically about the interesting lessons and the wide range of other activities. Their very positive attitudes to learning and excellent behaviour ensure that lessons are productive. Pupils of all ages get on well together and show great respect for each other. For example, in an assembly, everyone celebrated the special achievements of pupils in each class. Pupils know how to live a healthy lifestyle and they are aware of dangers to their safety. They make an outstanding contribution to the school community, for example through the school council or when the older pupils act as spelling buddies for the younger ones. They have a good understanding of the wider world through their study of other places, faiths and festivals. The curriculum is broad and interesting, which helps pupils to enjoy their learning and achieve well in many subjects. Levels of care, guidance and support are good.

Leadership and management are good. Recent staff changes, including a new headteacher, have created challenges in sustaining the school's strengths and tackling areas for improvement. Nonetheless, leaders have a clear focus on improving aspects of pupils' achievement. New ways of tracking pupils' progress are beginning to give leaders a coherent picture of pupils' achievement across the school. Through perceptive self-evaluation, leaders have a clear picture of the effectiveness of the school and know what needs to be done next. This puts the school in a good position to improve its work. Overall the school provides good value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children join Reception with skills and abilities typical for their age. They make good progress and by the end of Reception their standards are above expectations for their age, particularly in their personal and language skills. Children enjoy their learning and achieve well. Parents say their children settle very quickly at school because the staff are welcoming and helpful. Good links with the pre-school provision based at St Mary's support this process effectively. Both classrooms are lively places for learning and the children behave well because the staff establish good routines and give plenty of praise. Activities are interesting and enjoyable, such

as when Nursery children are exploring different ways of using rice for cooking, as part of their work on the Chinese New Year. In most sessions the staff strike a good balance between leading the learning and providing opportunities for children to make choices. Children are given opportunities to explore things that interest them, which helps develop their independence and confidence. Occasionally, particularly in whole-class activities, staff do not think carefully enough about how they can enrich each child's learning. The staff keep a close track on each child's progress through careful observations of how they are learning.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase the proportion of lessons where the pace and challenge of the work enables pupils to make rapid progress.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

When children enter Year 1 their standards are above average. They make good progress as they move through the school generally maintaining their high standards and often exceeding them at the end of Year 6. Standards in Year 2 are significantly above average especially in reading and mathematics; writing skills are not so strong. In national tests in 2007 at the end of Year 6, standards were average and achievement for these pupils was satisfactory. This cohort included a higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties than is usual for the school. Current Year 6 pupils have made good progress and their standards are significantly above average, particularly in reading. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress towards the targets set for them. Their needs are identified clearly, work is well chosen to help them take the next step in their learning, and they benefit from sensitive support

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

### **Grade: 1**

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Good teaching in most lessons and work that is well planned to meet individual needs, help pupils to make good progress. Teachers make clear to pupils what they will learn in a lesson, which gives added purpose to the work. Whole-class sessions are usually lively and interesting, which captures and holds the pupils' attention and makes them keen to learn. Teachers make lessons enjoyable by using a good variety of activities to encourage learning. Teachers also encourage pupils to assess their own understanding, which increases pupils' involvement and provides valuable feedback on how they can improve. Good relationships and plenty of praise for success are strong features of most lessons. Occasionally, the pace of learning is too slow or the teacher leads the lesson for too long and does not allow enough time for the pupils to work independently. In a few lessons, the work is not challenging enough, particularly for the more able pupils. Teachers assess pupils frequently to check how well they are doing. In some cases, this information is used well to set suitably challenging work, but good practice is inconsistent. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is thorough and the best practice identifies ways in which pupils can improve their skills.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

A well planned curriculum supports pupils' good academic progress and their outstanding personal development. Pupils enjoy a wide range of learning experiences such as when younger pupils use play situations to develop their language and writing skills. Many visits and visitors enrich learning. Pupils' differing needs are well met. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have appropriate work and support, whilst the most able take part in activities such as extra mathematics lessons at the local secondary school. Basic skills are developed well in literacy and numeracy lessons. Using these basic skills more in other subjects is capturing pupils' interest and helping to improve writing skills, especially for the boys. Pupils develop an appropriate range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills. There are plans in place to ensure that ICT skills are used in subjects across the curriculum but these have not yet been fully implemented. Pupils' outstanding personal skills owe much to a good programme of personal and social education. Lots of activities outside lessons enable pupils to pursue their interests in areas such as music, sport and languages. Older pupils are enjoying organising lunchtime clubs of their own.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Good levels of care and support, much appreciated by parents, help pupils to enjoy school and achieve well. The pupils trust the staff. A typical comment was 'If you have a problem, the teachers will sort it out' which exemplifies the very positive relationships that underpin the work of the school. Pupils' differing needs are well supported. Strong links with outside agencies help to ensure that vulnerable pupils receive the support they need. Pupils are very well prepared to move to their next school. A close partnership with the local secondary school gives pupils many opportunities for music, drama, sport, dance and languages. Pupils in danger of falling behind in their work are identified quickly and effective support is provided to boost their achievement. Pupils like having targets to aim for in literacy and numeracy because it helps them to think about how to improve. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place. Risk assessments of educational visits are carried out appropriately but have not been completed for all areas in school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The recently appointed headteacher, well supported by senior leaders, is strongly focused on raising pupils' achievement and sustaining their outstanding personal development. Staff work effectively as a team to bring about improvements. Accurate self-evaluation is well informed by regular checks on the effectiveness of the school's work carried out by senior and subject leaders. Relative weaknesses are identified and action is taken to bring about improvements, measures which are already leading to improvement in standards. The school improvement plan sets out the right priorities and provides a clear route to improvement. Well-focused professional development for all staff is matched well to the school's priorities. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. They hold the school to account well and have kept a close eye of pupils' achievement in recent years. The school has sustained

good achievement and standards since the previous inspection and is well placed to improve still further.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

11 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary School, Kirkby Lonsdale, LA6 2DN

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school to find out how well you are doing. It really is a happy school where you all work hard and enjoy your lessons. We found just one way we think it could be even better.

When we talked to you in lessons and at playtime, it was clear that you really enjoy being at school. It seems you like almost everything about your school and particularly the interesting work in lessons and playing with all your friends. We think you do well with your work because you enjoy school. You behave exceptionally well. For example, in your celebration assembly everyone in the hall sat and listened carefully, including the Nursery children. You all get on very well together and the older ones help the younger ones, for example with spelling or at playtime. From visiting some of your lessons and looking at your work, it is clear you are making good progress, which is helping you to reach standards that are better than in most other schools. The teaching is good in most lessons, but there are times when the learning moves rather slowly and the work is not hard enough for some children.

You say there are lots of interesting things to do at school, and we agree. Activities such as the Reception visit to Skipton Castle and those at Queen Elizabeth School all add to your enjoyment. Many of you have a good understanding about being healthy and staying safe. The jobs you do around school help you to make an outstanding contribution to your community. All the staff take good care of you and make sure you are happy and ready to learn. Your headteacher, staff and the governors are doing a good job in helping your school to get better.

We have asked your school to do one important thing to improve your learning.

Make sure that you learn quickly in all your lessons and that the work you are given is suitably challenging.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school.

Yours sincerely

George Crowther

Lead Inspector