

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111340
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	325356
Inspection date	23 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Geoff Lawrence

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	229
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Williams
Headteacher	Mr K Powell
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Manor Lane Middlewich Cheshire CW10 9DH
Telephone number	01606 832164
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the provision for science, leadership and management, and how involved pupils are in their own learning. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form; nationally published assessment data; the school's assessment records; relevant policies; observations of the school at work, including visits to lessons; and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Discussions were also held with staff, the chair of governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified.

Description of the school

St Mary's serves a wide catchment area and pupils come from a mixed range of backgrounds, but the overall profile is one of social and economic advantage. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. Most pupils are White British. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) consists of a Reception class.

St Mary's is an Investor in People (IiP) and holds the IiP leadership and management accreditation. Other awards include, Basic Skills Quality Mark, National Healthy Schools Award, Activemark, International Schools Award and the Inclusion Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The warm ethos and peaceful atmosphere is evident throughout St Mary's. This is a good school with many outstanding features. This judgement differs from the school's view of its own effectiveness, which it considered to be outstanding in its self-evaluation. It is not outstanding overall because in Key Stage 2 pupils' overall progress and standards in science are no better than satisfactory.

Everyone connected with the school, including pupils, parents and governors, are fully justified in feeling proud of its successes. The first-class support provided for pupils' personal development helps to create mature and confident young people, who take their responsibilities around school most seriously. This contributes significantly to the school's outstanding community spirit. The positive view of the school is endorsed not only by inspection findings, but also by the vast majority of parents whose comments typically included, 'Children are nurtured into well rounded individuals,' and 'They are allowed to develop both personally and academically.'

Pupils enjoy school immensely and this is reflected in their high level of attendance and their excellent attitudes to learning. They have a keen understanding of how to keep healthy. Pupils report that they feel safe and free from bullying because they know who to turn to if a problem should occur. Pupils are pleased to use their initiative, for instance to plan fundraising activities to support many charities. Pupils feel they have a strong voice in school affairs. The school council makes a valuable contribution, not only to school life, but by working in partnership with the local council on the Middlewich in Bloom' project.

Achievement is good. Children enter the EYFS with skills that are wide ranging, but overall in line with expectations for their age. Their personal and social development is often better than normally found. Children have good attitudes to learning, settle well into school and soon make rapid progress. At the end of their time in Reception their skills are above those expected. These above average standards are maintained in reading, writing and mathematics throughout Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2 there have been good improvements overall since the last inspection. Standards at the end of Year 6 fell significantly following the last inspection, but the school acted swiftly to ensure considerable improvements the following year. These improvements have been quicker in mathematics and English than in science, where pupils' performance is not as high as in the other subjects. Inspection evidence shows that this is still the case. The good gains in mathematics and English have been due to the successful action taken to raise standards to above average by the end of Year 6. For example, in English the curriculum now provides a greater stimulus for pupils to improve their writing skills. As a result, the number of pupils achieving the higher levels in English is above average.

Behind the school's good achievement is the highly effective programme to support pupils' personal development, including their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school works successfully to prepare pupils to take their place in a culturally diverse society. It ensures that pupils know about their local community and have a sense of the wider world. As a result, pupils have an excellent understanding and appreciation of other cultures. This is an outstanding feature in a school with a low proportion of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.

Pupils flourish at St Mary's because the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good across the school and teachers make lessons challenging and engaging. They involve pupils in

their own learning so that they clearly understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or difficulties make good progress. This is due to the rigour shown in identifying how best to help them, the planning and implementation of useful programmes to meet their needs and extremely effective links with outside agencies.

The good curriculum promotes pupils' personal development exceptionally well. It is enriched with high quality activities, including a wide range of out-of-school clubs and educational visits. Pupils have opportunities to work with a variety of specialists to extend their skills further. There is good provision for music, drama and dance and this effectively promotes pupils' creative talents. The more cross-curricular approach has been successful in raising standards in mathematics and English, but has not had the same impact on standards in science.

The headteacher's leadership is very strong and provides a clear direction for the school. Everyone in the school shares his relentless commitment to community cohesion, equality of opportunity and to ensuring pupils' good personal development and care. As a result, teachers know the pupils extremely well and this enables them to provide excellent academic and personal guidance. Staff ensure that all statutory requirements relating to the safeguarding of pupils are met. The headteacher is ably supported by a strong management team and an extremely knowledgeable and influential governing body. The school's self-evaluation is generally accurate, but overgenerous in some judgements. For example, leadership and management is good rather than outstanding because leaders and managers have yet to have sufficient impact on raising standards and achievement in science. The good progress made since the last inspection and the effective quality of current provision, which includes outstanding features, demonstrate the excellent capacity for the school to continue to improve and to offer good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

In the EYFS children have a good start to their education and progress well. By the end of Reception, they attain above expected levels in all areas of their learning, most notably in their language skills, mathematical skills and excellent personal development. Since the last inspection, there have been good improvements, particularly in the development of much better outdoor provision. This has helped to improve the learning environment and, as a result, children have access to a wider range of experiences, which have contributed to their good progress. Teaching is good and activities are well planned and purposeful. For example, in one activity, using the traditional story of 'The Three Little Pigs' as a starting point, children explored how to build houses from straw, wood and play bricks. Consequently, they worked with enthusiasm and sustained concentration. Leadership and management are good. The EYFS leader has a clear vision of how to develop provision further. She has ensured that all the welfare requirements are met and that children's progress is monitored closely. Staff have established excellent relationships with parents and outside agencies. These contribute to the high quality care children receive.

What the school should do to improve further

- In Key Stage 2 improve provision in science to raise standards and achievement to match those in English and mathematics.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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 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?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you so much for the marvellous welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. As you and most of your parents think, you go to a good school, which has many outstanding features.

You develop into mature and sensible young people. I know that you and your families are very proud of your school. Your behaviour is excellent and you try hard in lessons. You make good progress, particularly in mathematics and English, because you are taught and supported well. Those of you who sometimes find the work a bit hard make just as much progress as your classmates because you have a lot of support in class or in small groups outside lessons. All the adults in school take extremely good care of you.

You told me your teachers find many ways to make learning fun. You know what a healthy lifestyle is and how to keep yourself and others safe. Your headteacher and all the other staff work very hard indeed to make sure that you enjoy coming to school. They know just how to make your school go from strength to strength.

Those who are in charge of the school do their job well. Within all its good work, there is one thing that could help make your school even better. I have asked your headteacher and governors to make sure that those of you in Years 3 to 6 improve your standards in science, so that they are as good as those you achieve in English and mathematics.

Thank you once again for your help. I enjoyed my time with you and your teachers. I hope that you continue to work hard and enjoy school.