

St Marys CofE Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105495
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	324231
Inspection date	22 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Mike Hewlett

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 controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	238
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 R Palmer
Headteacher	Mr Barrie Chalmers
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Adscombe Street Alexandra Park Moss Side Manchester M16 7AQ

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	22 June 2009
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Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievement and standards in English and mathematics, and the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Evidence was collected from observing lessons and pupils' work, and from a scrutiny of the school's documentation and progress data. Inspectors also analysed the parent questionnaires and met with senior leaders, groups of children, staff and governors. 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 and these have been included, where appropriate, in the report.

Description of the school

St Marys Church of England Junior and Infant School is an average sized school serving an area of considerable economic and social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible to claim free school meals is very high at almost five times the national average. Most pupils are Black British and the proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds is well above average. A significant proportion of pupils are refugees and asylum seekers. Only a third of pupils speak English as their first language. A well above average proportion of pupils joins and leaves the school throughout the school year. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. Provision for Nursery and Reception aged children are reported in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has the Healthy Schools Award. There is a care club for children both before and after school, which is managed privately and did not form part of this inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Marys is an outstanding school which operates in challenging circumstances. Pupils thrive in its extremely nurturing atmosphere and parents have great confidence that the school values their children and keeps them safe. 'This school is a dream come true', and, 'We are all part of one family', are typical of the comments made by parents and carers. The key to its success is the uncompromising search for improvement driven by the inspirational leadership of the headteacher. Staff know they are valued and have a genuine say in school improvement. Leaders have a determination and passion to raise pupils' self-esteem and achievement, and to improve the way they carry out their own work. As a result, pupils have strong self-belief and staff have very high expectations of just how well pupils can do. This has led to a year-on-year rise in standards.

Children's skills on entry are exceptionally low, particularly in language and communication and in their personal and social skills. They make excellent progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage in developing speaking and listening skills and in learning to concentrate and work cooperatively. As a result, standards in all areas are broadly in line with national averages by the time they start Year 1. Standards are rising year-on-year in Key Stage 1 and are broadly average at the end of Year 2. Attainment in mathematics and reading is slightly better than in writing because encouraging pupils to become confident speakers and readers has been the correct priority. By Year 6, standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. This represents excellent achievement in all three subjects against a background of exceptionally high levels of pupil mobility that is found in every year group. For example, more than 50% of the 2008 Year 6 cohort arrived in the school within the previous two years. Unsurprisingly, those pupils who remain in the school for the longest period make particularly rapid progress. However, progress is outstanding overall and is consistently so throughout the school. This has been the case for several years. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those at an early stage of learning English, and newly admitted pupils all make excellent progress in relation to their starting points. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls.

Teaching and learning are outstanding overall and a major factor in enabling pupils to achieve so well. Exciting teaching methods and a brisk pace brings learning alive for pupils. An example is when groups of older children were challenged to work out percentages. They then successfully applied this knowledge to the plants they were planning to sell on their 'Enterprise Day', making sure they got the best price. Teachers encourage pupils to work in pairs to help them develop and share their ideas. This, in turn, helps to build their self-confidence and verbal fluency. In all lessons excellent relationships ensure pupils are responsive and keen to learn. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well and enliven many of the lessons with a sense of fun as well as celebrating pupils' successes. Teaching assistants' in-depth knowledge of the needs of the pupils they are supporting enables these pupils to make rapid strides with their learning. Teachers provide pupils with excellent verbal feedback during lessons helping them to improve. Parents confirm that they find staff friendly and approachable and that they are kept very well informed about their children's progress.

Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. They have an impressive awareness of how to stay healthy and keep safe. Older pupils are quick to act to help the youngest, and new pupils are soon made to feel at home. The school is a very harmonious community in which pupils from diverse ethnic backgrounds show mutual

respect and work exceptionally well together. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their attentiveness and participation in lessons. They behave exceptionally well in work and at play. Pupils are actively involved in improving their local community. For example, they are working in partnership with a local arts centre providing art, street dancing and drama. They develop an excellent appreciation of different cultural traditions and beliefs within their own community. Pupils' achievement in acquiring basic academic skills, alongside their excellent personal and social skills and involvement in enterprise initiatives, sets them up very well for their later lives.

The excellent curriculum effectively meets the needs and interests of all the pupils within an attractive and stimulating environment for learning. The curriculum is enriched through an excellent range of visitors and visits to places of interest which aid pupils' first-hand learning effectively. For example, pupils talk excitedly about their project undertaken at Manchester museum. Pupils' skills in using computers are excellent and the school provides an extensive range of extra-curricular activities which pupils enjoy.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Procedures for vetting staff and safeguarding learners meet government requirements. Several parents particularly praised the way that staff work with them to ensure that their children are well looked after. They also appreciate the friendly atmosphere and the fact that a breakfast club has been set up to help working parents. Attendance rates have risen and are now broadly average. However, despite the school's determined efforts in working with families, involving outside agencies and celebrating attendance, there remain a small number of persistent absentees.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher and staff with leadership responsibilities are highly experienced, demand the best for the pupils and provide clear direction for the work of the school. This reflects the school's outstanding commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and to eliminate any discrimination. This is a highly inclusive school that values and welcomes all members of the school and wider community. Staff work very well together and are keen to develop their skills further by leading staff training and sharing their expertise. The school makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion, constantly working to strengthen its links with the local community and involving it in all aspects of school life. The global aspect of this work is given added momentum by the rich multi-ethnic community it serves and the links it makes with pupils' countries of origin. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school sets itself challenging targets which it invariably meets and often exceeds. Monitoring of teaching and learning is extremely rigorous and very quickly picks up on any areas that need to be improved. Governors are highly effective and very committed to the school. Their well established links and knowledge of the school's work enable them to play an active, questioning role in its development. Overall, the school has made outstanding progress since its previous inspection, offers excellent value for money and has an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make excellent progress across all areas of learning. By the end of Reception, most meet the standards expected of them for their age, although their skills in communication, language and literacy lag a little behind other areas of learning. The school takes great care to assess the ability, experience and needs of the children accurately. Extensive contact with families encourages joint work and has helped to tackle issues of some initial poor attendance. Parents come to trust staff and respect the advice they give. Clear routines for work, play and behaviour help children to settle very quickly. They soon become very happy, busy, and eager

to please. An exceptionally calm, purposeful atmosphere prevails. The progress children make in learning to work together is a particular strength. This is evident in both indoor and outdoor work, for instance in the way children queue, take turns and chat as they share their snack. Management is extremely effective, as demonstrated by regular and thorough assessment, detailed development planning and the availability of quality resources. Staff teamwork and imaginative use of the open access indoor areas are excellent. There is a very good balance of indoor and outdoor activity and of directed and independent learning. Common working arrangements and exemplary liaison ensure smooth transition from Reception to Key Stage 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the attendance of the small number of pupils who are persistently absent from school.

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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?	1
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?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

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	3
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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

Inspection of St Marys Church of England Junior and Infant School, Manchester, M16 7AQ

As you know, we came to your school recently to see how you are getting on, and to find out whether St Marys was giving you the education you deserve. Thank you for being so friendly, polite and open. We very much enjoyed meeting you and seeing your work. A special thank you to the school council and to the other pupils who talked to us about your school.

You will be thrilled to know that we think yours is an excellent school. It has a very clear idea of what will help you to learn and is always trying to improve things. This is down to the dedicated hard work of the headteacher, staff and governors. You and your family know how fortunate you are to have people like this helping you. Teachers and all the adults in the school work together superbly well and want the very best for you. You respond by making every effort to do your best, and to show how much you like the staff. Because of this, your school is a happy, lively place with lots of interesting activities for you. Some of you talked to us about 'all the great things we do in this school!' You are lucky to be able to take part in such a wide range of sports, activities and projects, and to have such a say in planning what happens in school. You are learning how to get on with each other and share ideas. All this means that you are able to make excellent progress, both in the subjects you study and in learning how to tackle life outside school successfully.

Of course, even outstanding schools have things they can improve. In your case we think that one stands out. We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to try to make sure everyone comes to school regularly.

You can help by doing your very best not to miss any lessons, continuing to work as hard as you do, and following carefully all the good advice your teachers give you.