

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	103410
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	376895
Inspection dates	12–13 January 2012
Lead inspector	Raymond Lau

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Abbott
Headteacher	Alisa Hathaway
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2006
School address	Lodge Hill Road Selly Oak Birmingham B29 6NU
Telephone number	0121 675 1729
Fax number	0121 675 5065
Email address	enquiry@stmryb29.bham.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Raymond Lau

Additional inspector

Sue Hughes

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team sampled 9 lessons, of which 3 were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team and 7 teachers were seen as part of the sampling. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection; they observed the school's work, and documentation including improvement plans, records of the analysis and the tracking of pupils' progress, and of classroom observations, sampling pupils work, listened to pupils read, clarified attendance, and monitoring information. They analysed 32 staff, 45 student and 94 parental questionnaires.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than the average-sized primary school. Half the pupils come from a wide variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The school has a high mobility rate of pupils; some do not start or complete their education at the school.

The government floor standards have been exceeded consistently for the last three years. The school holds accreditation in the Quality Mark, Healthy Schools, Leading Aspects, Eco Bronze and Internet safety awards.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. The behaviour and safety of pupils is outstanding. The staff promote a very caring environment and strong ethos that permeates the school's work. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who are keen to do well. They enjoy attending school and develop a passion for learning. They are very courteous and polite to all people; their contributions to the school are exceptional.
- Pupils' achievement is good. Their attainment is above average across all subjects when combined together and progress is good. Achievement in English is particularly stronger than in mathematics, where boys' achievement is greater than girls. However, this is improving in mathematics and gaps in performance are closing.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations and strong subject knowledge. Tasks are generally matched well to the needs to the different abilities of learners. The teaching of mathematics is weaker than that of English. However, where there is strong teaching, this has accelerated progress in mathematics, particular that of girls'.
- Teacher's marking is inconsistent. Whilst there are pockets of good practice, marking does not always identify the next steps pupils need to take. On occasions, where this does exist, it is not always evident that pupils have responded to the feedback.
- Leadership and management are good. The Headteacher, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher, provides strong leadership to the development of the school. Data are analysed at senior level, but it is used inconsistently by middle leaders to inform monitoring and intervention strategies in contributing to whole school key priorities.
- The curriculum is creative in making links and promotes outstanding spiritual, moral social and cultural development throughout the school. Whilst initiatives and interventions in mathematics have improved pupils' achievement, the impact is not yet sufficiently consistent in stimulating pupils' confidence and application of numeracy skills across the curriculum.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' achievement by September 2013 in Mathematics, particular that of girls, by:
 - ensuring that there is consistently good or better teaching throughout the school
 - strengthening the curriculum to match the needs of individuals groups of learners.
- Develop the use of assessment to improve achievement by:
 - sharpening the monitoring and tracking assessment system to provide teachers with a clearer picture of pupils' progress
 - ensuring that teachers are consistent in marking the pupils work, note the next steps in what pupils need to do to improve, and check that they clearly respond to guidance given
 - holding middle leaders to account rigorously so that they make good use of data to review the school's key priorities in order to develop effective strategies and improve achievement further.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Reception class with attainment which is in-line with age-related expectations and get off to a rapid start. They are actively involved in their physical development, moving with energy, having fun and this demonstrates good contributions to their learning. By the time they leave Reception Year, their attainment is above national expectations, which represents good progress.

The good achievement in Key stage 1 has been consistent over-time. Attainment is above average in Mathematics, reading and writing. Pupils' reading is well developed, as there is good application of phonic skills (the sounds letters make) in pupils' reading and writing. For example, in a literacy lesson in Year 1, the teacher stimulated the boys to develop their skills in descriptive writing about ogres. They lay on the floor initially and used clipboards to enable them to record their thoughts quickly and be creative. Subsequently, pupils made good progress; their work was well presented and their handwriting was neat. Good achievement and good letter formation is continued in Year 2.

Pupils achieve well over time in Key Stage 2. Attainment in English and mathematics in Year 6 has continued to rise over the last three years and is above average when the performance of both subjects is combined. Attainment in English is well-above average and exceptionally stronger than in mathematics, although this picture continues to improve over time. Girls' achievement is weaker than that of boys, although the difference in performance is beginning to close. There are some variations in achievement between year groups. Nevertheless, pupils' progress is

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good overall. Current achievement in mathematics is accelerating in Year 5 and, in particular, Year 6. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Pupil turnover is high and this does affect the achievement of some specific individuals. However, with good targeted intervention work individuals make at least expected progress and many pupils making good progress, given their starting points.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers and pupils agree that teaching is good because it is reflected in pupils' high achievement over time. It is more effective in English than mathematics. However, strong mathematics teaching was observed in Years 5 and 6. In an outstanding Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher had excellent knowledge of the subject and about how pupils learn effectively. The planning was structured exceptionally well, with sequenced activities that included an engaging starting song. Pupils learnt and sang the song enthusiastically. They utilised what they remembered about square roots and applied this to the key features. The school's outstanding ethos has established a climate for learning in which pupils worked superbly well together to solve posed problems. Pupils' progress in this lesson is accelerating their skills and confidence in mathematics.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and have high expectations when planning work that is generally matched to individual needs and abilities well. When curriculum links are made with spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and activities are practically based, this enthruses and excites pupils' hunger for further learning. Pupils are articulate and confident in working in different combinations of settings. Support staff generally make good contributions to pupils' learning. Homework is set appropriately and pupils were particularly positive about the provision for mathematics online. Questioning has been effective, however some teachers' questioning does not challenge pupils' knowledge and understanding fully. In the lessons that were less effective, occasionally, work did not always match the needs of all learners and there was a lack of pace, with pupils spending too long on one activity. In a very small minority of lessons, learning did not always build or stretch pupils' understanding and, therefore, progress was limited and opportunities were missed for pupils to work independently to apply what they had gained in the lesson and accelerate their achievement. The majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were supportive about the quality of teaching. A small number commented that their children were not always being stretched sufficiently.

Teachers' marking of pupils' work is variable. Comments in books are positive, but sometimes lack specific guidance to explain what pupils need to do in order to improve their performance. Where specific guidance exists, it is unclear whether pupils have made responses to the feedback given. The school has recently introduced a 'Steps' approach enabling pupils to know their level of attainment. However, it is too early to measure the full effectiveness of this initiative. Pupils' views support this comment; not all of them knew how well they were doing in

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school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils, clearly, enjoy coming to school. This is demonstrated by their above-average rate of attendance over time. All pupils feel very safe in the school. Pupils articulated very clearly what constitutes unsafe situations and are aware of how to keep others and themselves safe. They demonstrated an excellent understanding of the different types of bullying and stated that bullying was very rare. It was dealt with swiftly, initially by peer mediators and by teachers.

The school has created a climate for trust and support because of pupils' exemplary attitudes to learning and conduct within lessons and around the school. Highly effective rewards and behaviour management are established. Even when lessons were not as effective, pupils' behaviour was positive. Inspectors observed the end-of-week celebration assembly. The school's strong ethos was celebrated with pupils' confident singing. A number of different rewards were awarded to individual pupils and classes. Older children took responsibilities to support the running of the assembly.

The pupils' contribution to promoting their positive learning ethos is exceptional. The active school council fundraises for the school, local and national charities. Members of the council felt strongly about the traffic congestion outside the school and, in conjunction with the police, staged a planned protest by the pedestrian crossing. Also, they educated speeding drivers about road safety and the dangers of this act. Older pupils act as playground pals for younger children by promoting their confidence and self-esteem. The innovation initiative of 'Partners' enables younger and older pupils to work together. A range of opportunities facilitates the partnership. There are also opportunities for older children to work with children from the local special school. Pupils exhibit mature attitudes to learning and outstanding social development.

Leadership and management

The leadership team are clearly driving school improvements. Leaders and managers have been successful over time in tackling the areas of weaknesses. The school was asked to make improvements to the quality of writing and presentation skills in pupils' work and, in addition, to sharpen its self-evaluation at all times. Achievement in English has accelerated and, whilst there are some variations in the performance of mathematics, the initiatives and actions have been successful in improving pupils' achievement. Consequently, the school's promotion of equality and tackling discrimination is good and their capacity for sustained improvement is good.

There is high staff morale and a commitment to improve. Staff professional development is effective, as training is enhanced by in-house Advanced Skills Teachers. While the school is setting targets for pupils and progress can be seen, the monitoring systems are unable, at present, to measure specific amount of progress made by learners. The middle leaders are committed and enthusiastic, participating in a range of monitoring activities. However, their contribution to the

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whole-school key priorities is variable. The governing body makes good contributions in holding the school to account for their performance. Governors are visible within the school and hold an annual writing competition for pupils.

The curriculum is good because it is broad and generally meets the needs of all learners. The thematic approach to the school's creative learning journey promotes outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The 'forest school' promotes the pupils' social skills and learning across the curriculum successfully. There are good partnerships with a number of different organisations that enhance the work of the school. For example, the school has identified mathematics as an area for development. A project delivered with visiting practitioners enabled pupils to develop their artistic and mathematical skills in re-designing an area of the school. However, whilst this was successful in increasing pupils' confidence, the curriculum for mathematics is not yet consistently strong in promoting achievement at a faster rate. The school has very strong enrichment activities, noticeably in sport, that include a very wide range of trips and residential visits that enhance pupils' learning.

The engagement of parents and carers is good. There is a range of initiatives, including the school's on-line 'Moodle' system, to enable parents and carers to support their children's learning. Parents and carers of children in Reception Year, Years 1 and 2 contribute to the curriculum regularly by reading alongside their children weekly. The arrangements for safeguarding are compliant with requirements. Records and checks are robust. There are sufficient numbers of first-aiders.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Birmingham, B29 6NU

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed coming to your school having discussions with different groups of children. You go to a good school. In the questionnaire some of you completed, you commented that you enjoy attending school and learn a lot in lessons. Also, you agree that teaching is good and we see that you make good progress. Some of you stated that you were not always aware of how well you are doing at school. We concluded that your behaviour is exceptional and you contribute extremely well. The teachers care for you well and you make good progress in English and mathematics. You leave the school prepared well for the next stages of your life.

When teachers plan and create opportunities for you to work together, you enjoy the lessons, participating actively and enthusiastically. You are supportive of your fellow classmates and to your 'partner' when working with a younger member of the school in developing their social and confidence skills. We enjoyed particularly seeing the quality of your art and written work displayed in the school. You appreciate going on trips, such as Sleeping Beauty and the residential visit. These contribute to your exceptional spiritual, moral and social development.

We have asked your headteacher and teachers to improve your skills and progress in mathematics further by making the curriculum even more exciting and creative. In addition, we have also asked all staff to challenge you more in lessons and when you respond to their feedback on your work. This is so that you can achieve even more.

You can pay your part by participating fully in continuing to attend school every day and by being on time. Also, to do your best by working hard, challenging yourself and participating in the school's many activities to develop your knowledge and skills.

Yours sincerely

Raymond Lau
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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