

Mary Dean's C of E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	113418
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	378703
Inspection dates	17–18 January 2012
Lead inspector	Janet Simms

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	373
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Gerry
Headteacher	Nigel Sparrow
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2006
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Janet Simms	Additional inspector
Lindsay Gabriel	Additional inspector
Mark Anderson	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 23 lessons taught by 13 teachers, some of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, held discussions with senior and middle leaders and with a member of the governing body. They held formal discussions with three groups of pupils and talked to many others in lessons and around the school. They observed pupils at play and at lunchtime, attended an assembly and observed other activities. The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised school documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings, school development plans, school advisers' reports and records of the tracking of pupils' progress.

Information about the school

Mary Dean's Church of England Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school. The governing body took over the management of an on-site pre-school group over two years ago. The school now operates this alongside its own nursery provision, which itself has expanded significantly since the school's previous inspection. The school runs a breakfast club before school and children can attend an after-school club at a site nearby. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school means is low, as are the proportions of those from minority ethnic groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also low. The government's floor standards have been exceeded during the past three years. Among its recently acquired awards are Healthy Schools and the Activemark.

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	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. When pupils leave Year 6, their standards in English and mathematics are well above average and have been for several years.
- Pupils make good progress in academic subjects and in their personal development. In some years their achievement has been exceptional.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils develop independence and good work habits. They are proud of their school and take care in presenting their work.
- The school's recent incorporation of pre-school groups and the development of nursery provision are resulting in improved standards, particularly in reading and writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Tracking of individual pupil's progress is effective. The resulting small group intervention work in all years enables those of different abilities to progress well. However, tracking at whole-school level does not identify sharply how well different groups of pupils are progressing.
- Teaching is good, but it is not completely consistent.
- Self-evaluation is accurate, identifying weaknesses and implementing successful plans to address them.
- Good leadership and management have sustained the school's success despite financial constraints which have led to resourcing difficulties, such as those in information and communication technology and outdoor provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by ensuring that:
 - teaching consistently provides pupils with work which meets their different needs in all phases of lessons, and
 - lessons include a sufficient variety of activities to ensure that pupils are not inactive, and listening to teachers for too long.
- Ensure that leaders and managers:
 - extend the use of tracking which currently focuses on individuals' progress to include that of groups, to make sure that all groups are progressing equally well

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- improve the outside environment for the Early Years Foundation Stage so that children can develop all areas of learning as extensively outdoors as they do inside classrooms
- enable pupils to use information and communication technology more extensively in all their work.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children's skills on entry are largely similar to those typically expected for their age, except in language development, where they are significantly lower. Inspection evidence confirms the views of the very large majority of parents and carers who feel that their children make good progress throughout the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils' good achievement and the well above average standards shown in recent years' test results were also evident in many lessons observed, particularly at Key Stage 2.

Year 2 pupils' standards in English have improved following uncharacteristic results last year, when weaker performance arose from difficulties specific to that year group, particularly staffing changes. A Year 2 literacy lesson showed pupils enthusiastically connecting parts of sentences with above-average levels of competence. Attainment is average overall by Year 2, showing good achievement from starting points, particularly in reading, which is pupils' strongest skill throughout the school. Reading is above average in Year 2 and Year 6. English skills are strengthening further because the school's control over early phonics teaching, as well as other aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, is showing positive effects in accelerating progress at Key Stage 1. Staff have accurately identified weaknesses in writing and implemented successful plans to improve it. These have already resulted in the gaps narrowing between pupils' reading and writing standards. Pupils are now proud of their writing and present their work neatly.

Achievement is enhanced by frequent 'support group' provision, where large classes are split into smaller, usually setted groups for English and mathematics. Here, work is specifically tailored for different levels of ability. These regular sessions, together with other effective interventions and challenges for more-able pupils, ensure that all groups progress similarly well. Support assistants often help those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they progress well from their starting points. Year 6 pupils are on track to match the previous years' above-average attainment.

In subjects beyond English and mathematics, pupils speak enthusiastically of their achievements in sports and their enjoyment of science, particularly practical work. Good observational drawings of daffodils in a Year 6 art lesson, and Year 5 pupils' good progress in a geography topic about mountain environments, exemplify their

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good achievement across the curriculum. Pupils comment perceptively about their wish to have more opportunities to use computers, but provision of these is currently limited.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers express the view that teaching is good, and these views are accurate. Although a minority of teaching observed during the inspection was less effective, it is typically good, both in small groups and in whole classes, and is key to pupils' good progress over time. Sometimes, however, work is not matched well to the needs of all in the class. A Year 1 mathematics lesson, ordering numbers to 20, for instance, showed more-able pupils insufficiently stretched to achieve higher standards. Occasionally, as when Year 3 pupils were learning about the plots of stories, they are inactive for too long, listening to the teacher. In most lessons, however, these aspects are better, providing opportunities for pupils to talk together and work in groups and pairs to resolve problems set to match their abilities well.

The teaching of writing has improved because of good staff training, with standards rising as a result. Teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but less effective in the limited outdoor areas, especially in Reception, because resources to support all areas of learning outside are restricted. Although staff use what they have well, this limited provision adversely affects children's learning, though they play outside very happily.

Good teaching of phonics when pupils are young is strengthening all aspects of English, so pupils are confident speakers and good readers. Good mathematics work seen in groups in Years 5 and 6 showed very focused learning about data handling. In these and other lessons, pupils are very good at explaining their reasoning and discussing how they might improve their work. A Year 6 mathematics lesson exemplified how limited computer access slowed learning down somewhat, but pupils' attitudes towards this showed their characteristically sensitive understanding and tolerance. High staff expectations of pupils' personal development lead to good incorporation of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the curriculum into teaching. This results in considerate, thoughtful attitudes, very good cooperation as pupils work together, and high levels of independence.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is typically good, with the vast majority of pupils showing sensitive consideration for others' welfare and respect for adults. Staff record any misbehaviour carefully and the school offers good support for individuals infringing agreed codes, or falling short of the school's high expectations. A small minority of parents and carers express concerns about behaviour, however, as do a minority of pupils. Inspectors explored these issues and the school acknowledges recent difficulties with individual pupils, most of which have been addressed and resolved. The few pupils who continue to present difficulties are supported well; inspectors observed no behaviour which disrupted learning and the vast majority of pupils have

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good attitudes to learning. Pupils have a good awareness of different types of bullying and know what steps to take to prevent it. They say that bullying is rare but the few incidents which do occur, mainly at lunchtimes and playtimes, are being investigated thoroughly by staff. In most lessons and playtimes, pupils behave well. They are interested in their work and listen politely and courteously to teachers and other pupils. Pupils say they feel safe in school, with a small minority of concerns about bullying. Regular attendance and punctuality confirm pupils' own views that they are happy to come to school and that they 'learn a lot'.

Leadership and management

The newly restructured senior team has settled well. Good representation from the growing Early Years Foundation Stage staff ensures that senior leaders now have the whole picture of pupils' development from their start in education. The school's recent record of well above average attainment and good achievement by Year 6 remains secure. Self-evaluation is accurate, so issues such as relative weaknesses in writing, or those which led to slower learning in Year 2 last year, are identified swiftly; changes are implemented and improvements are tracked. Lack of funds lie at the root of some issues, such as having no outside cover for Early Years Foundation Stage children, and few classroom computers. The school has sustained its strong outcomes despite these issues, which is attributable to good, efficient leadership, management and governance.

Staff at all levels are well involved in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, with a recent strong focus on how well teaching is improving writing following recent training and changes to the curriculum. This corporate approach leads to good levels of common understanding about what needs improvement and has developed a committed staff who contribute well to the school's strong capacity to improve further. While recognising improvements, staff are determined to maintain the momentum of accelerated progress in writing.

Senior staff recognise that the school's current tracking of the relative progress of different groups requires strengthening because it does not give them a sufficiently clear picture. For instance, staff cannot be certain that pupils in mixed-age classes progress as well from their starting points as those learning with their discrete year groups. However, staff are thoroughly committed to ensuring equality and to preventing and tackling any discrimination, with test results and inspection evidence indicating that different groups currently achieve well. Leaders are aware of the importance of new tracking systems in providing the basis for future management of any emerging differences in performance. Leaders and the governing body ensure that safeguarding arrangements are secure and all pupils are individually very well known to staff, so the pastoral aspects of management are strong.

The curriculum, which has been reorganised since the previous inspection, includes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Learning opportunities present a good balance for the development of personal and academic skills. Recent changes have resulted in better engagement and interest, with many

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lessons linking subjects together effectively. A Year 6 real-life problem solving and data handling lesson, for instance, provided a link with previous learning about democracy as pupils voted on different suggestions. Secure arrangements for safeguarding lead to the great majority of pupils feeling safe. They enjoy all available opportunities for learning and participate actively in the many clubs and additional activities on offer.

Many parents and carers appreciate the good, flexible provision offered by the breakfast club, where pupils get a good start to their school day. Some would like an on-site after-school club, but a very small take-up when this was provided recently meant it was unviable, so children are now collected by car after school to attend nearby provision. A few parents and carers say that they would welcome more effective communication with the school, to keep them informed of developments and to ensure that their concerns are considered. Development of the school's website is under way to help with this, and senior staff have agreed to review how communications of this sort are arranged.

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.



19 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mary Dean's C of E Primary School, Plymouth PL5 2LS

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to your school for the inspection. It was a pleasure for us to be there and I am writing to tell you what we found out.

- Yours is a good school. You leave Mary Dean's with standards in English and mathematics which are well above average and you make good progress in most subjects. Your information and communication technology (ICT) skills are not quite as well developed.
- We were pleased to see your good behaviour and attitudes. You develop good independent working habits and are proud of your work. We found that some of you have some concerns about occasional incidents of bullying and weaker behaviour and we looked into this carefully. Adults are doing all they can to improve this situation and we feel that you can help them with this if you always tell adults about it when it happens so they can sort it out.
- Good teaching is helping you to improve reading and writing well. Your reading is especially strong and your writing has improved because of improvements in teaching.
- Adults track your progress carefully and make sure you get good support to help you all progress well. We think it would be helpful if they knew more about the progress of different groups, so we have asked them to improve that.
- Teaching is good, but we have asked the school to make sure all lessons keep everybody active, learning well and doing work which always suits each one of you.
- Adults know what the strengths and areas for development of the school are and are always working to improve your learning. We feel they are right to be working to improve the outdoor areas for younger children and improve access to computers to help your learning.

Yours sincerely

Janet Simms
Lead inspector

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