

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116343
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	357947
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2010
Reporting inspector	David Shepherd

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	451
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Hall, Jan Bradford
Headteacher	Llyn Codling
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 14 lessons and 14 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with senior staff, all staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage, a group of pupils and three members of the governing body including the joint chairs. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at safeguarding documentation and the school's analysis of its latest data from national test results. Questionnaires from 74 parents and carers, 93 pupils and 9 staff were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Why has attainment remained low in all subjects at Key Stages 1 and 2?
- In what ways is attainment in reading, writing and mathematics improving?
- How consistent are teaching and assessment practices throughout the school?
- How effective are the measures the school has put in place on raising attainment and accelerating progress? How effective are the measures the school has put in place on raising attainment and accelerating progress?

Information about the school

This is a large primary school that serves a culturally diverse community. Approximately half of the pupils are from Asian heritages. The next largest groups are White British and Black African heritages. Approximately three quarters of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The needs of these pupils mainly relate to speech, language and communication and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A lower than average number of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than typically found.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of two Nursery classes and two Reception classes. Since September 2010, the school has been in a formal partnership with another local primary school. The headteacher of the partner school is now the executive headteacher of both schools. The executive headteacher and deputy headteacher of the partner school work two and a half days a week in each school. Other staff from the partner school coach and support at St Mary's as the need arises. The reason for this partnership is to support school improvement. Prior to this, the executive headteacher and deputy from the partner school were allocated to the school for two terms under the National Leader in Education Scheme.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Mary's is a satisfactory school. It is a rapidly improving school in a number of areas. The leadership of the executive headteacher, ably supported by the head of teaching and learning and the deputy headteacher from the partner school, is high profile. Although the coaching skills of senior managers still has scope to be better, recent improvements in pupils' learning and progress and in the energy and drive of the recently restructured senior leadership team indicate that the schools' capacity to improve and build upon these significant positive changes is good. Self-evaluation routines are extremely accurate and incisive. Senior staff and governors have a good understanding of how the school is doing and what needs to be done next. The executive headteacher provides a strong and clear sense of purpose for staff and governors and parents also notice the positive changes. They are extremely supportive. As one parent wrote, 'I am so happy in this school and my child is happy too.' Links with the partner school are outstanding and are leading to rapid improvements in pupils' progress and their well-being.

Children start in the Reception classes with skills below those expected for their age and make satisfactory progress. In Key Stage 1 and 2, attainment has been stubbornly low for a number of years because the teaching has not focused enough on pupils' outcomes. This is being addressed now and ways of raising attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are being implemented to good effect. However, there has not yet been sufficient time in the partnership arrangement for these methods to be trialled in all classes so, although much improved and still improving and good overall, teaching is not always consistent in all classes.

Attainment has been significantly below average for the past few years at the end of both key stages in national tests. Current work reflects an improving picture and pupils' attainment is now near to those levels expected. The attainment of boys and girls is similar. However, although pupils' good progress is contributing to the improving attainment levels, their achievement is currently only satisfactory because of gaps in learning in the past. Improvements in teaching are rapidly overcoming this. The school has set ambitious, yet realistic, targets to raise attainment at the end of Year 2 to the national average by the end of this academic year and, in Year 6, by the end of the next academic year. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language, make good progress because most teaching is good, and, at times, outstanding. In the small minority of lessons when teaching is not as good as this, teachers do not give pupils enough guidance about their work. Additionally, resources are not varied enough in all areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Pupils make a good contribution to the smooth running of the school. The friendship stops at playtimes are run by prefects from Year 6. This initiative helps to ensure younger pupils

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do not feel isolated in the playground and helps to create a family ethos in school. Year 6 prefects pick up litter inside the school and in the playground at lunchtimes. Pupils raise funds for a range of charities. This is a friendly school where pupils are looked after well and provided with good guidance and support. Attendance is average.

The school's curriculum is good and is enriched by a wide range of visitors to the school. The enterprise project in each year group is a particular strength. Funds raised in this way are used for the benefit of pupils. The breakfast and after-school clubs provide pupils with good opportunities to develop their social skills.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics to national averages by July 2012 through the school by:
 - improving teaching strategies in these subjects
 - showing pupils what they are expected to learn in these subjects
 - improving the accuracy of self-assessments
 - giving pupils guidance about how to improve the presentation of work
 - increasing the range of resources in all areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.increasing the range of resources in all areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Build on the already improved consistency of teaching through the school in the coming academic year so that at least 80% is at least good by ensuring:
 - pupils' misunderstandings during lessons are corrected
 - marking indicates to pupils the next steps in their learning
 - introductions to lessons are not too longintroductions to lessons are not too long.
- Extend the coaching model of staff improvement throughout the school by developing the skills of senior and middle leaders to accelerate progress and raise attainment in all classes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' good progress has helped them move from low levels of attainment when they start school to the point where current work shows they are close to reaching the levels expected. They respond readily to their teachers and settle down quickly to their work. For example, pupils in Year 6 were enthusiastic and fully committed to learning about decimal fractions. They discussed what they were doing with each other and adults. They sought guidance from their teacher in mini-workshops that were held during the lesson to teach pupils who were stuck on particular aspects of their work. More able pupils relished the challenge of tricky problems. In this outstanding lesson, one of these pupils said, 'We ought to be able to get these sums right because we are in Year 6.' Pupils in Year 5 followed the guidance of their teacher during the lesson as they were shown the steps to follow in writing a character description of the Iron Man. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language receive well-targeted support and they make good progress in line with their different abilities. There

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are no significant differences between the achievements of different minority ethnic groups.

Pupils know about healthy foods and the importance of exercise. They enjoy physical activities in lessons as well as at playtimes and lunchtimes. Many take part in a range of out-of-school sports clubs such as tag-rugby and football. Pupils make a good contribution to the school. Year 6 pupils are proud of the contributions they make as prefects and young governors. Pupils demonstrate good social skills by sharing equipment and materials and by working well in groups. Behaviour is generally good, although a few pupils say this is not always the case. Pupils learn about the beliefs, values and ways of life of people who think differently from themselves.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

A strength of the teaching is the way in which teachers draw groups of pupils together in mini-workshops to clarify their understanding on particular aspects of their work. Another notable strength is when teachers show pupils what they expect them to learn and practise in their work. Learning is brisk when groups of pupils settle down to their work as soon as possible while teachers explain further learning to other groups of pupils. Pupils share their ideas with each other in a responsible manner. This helps them develop their ideas further. Strong relationships and respect between pupils and adults are a significant feature in all classes and these help create a busy and positive learning environment.

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Support by teaching assistants encourages pupils to think for themselves and become independent. Occasionally, some pupils lose their concentration and their learning is not as rapid as it should be when teachers talk for too long before settling pupils down to their tasks. In the best lessons, teachers provide good guidance to pupils. In marking pupils' books, teachers include a comment about what pupils could do to improve. However, overall there are not enough comments to guide pupils in their learning. Pupils' self-assessments are occasionally too positive. The presentation of work in books is sometimes untidy.

The school's emphasis on teaching basic skills is having a positive impact in improving pupils' attainment. Provision to promote pupils' personal development and their well-being is included effectively throughout the curriculum. Enrichment activities are varied and include a wide variety of visits and visitors to the school, which are much enjoyed by the pupils. ♦

Support for pupils is effective and this is a reason why pupils and their parents have every confidence in the school and its teachers. As one parent wrote, 'All the staff seem to really care about the children. All the children are treated as individuals.' Intervention groups are held for those with learning and physical needs. Nearly all pupils comment in their questionnaire that they receive good support and care from the staff and this helps them in their work. Procedures for maintaining attendance are effective. Transition arrangements between Reception and Year 1 and on transfer to secondary education are good.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership and management of the school are good. The executive headteacher and deputy from the partner school have been in post for a relatively short time, although immediately prior to this they were allocated to the school on a consultancy basis for two terms. During this time, they have galvanised the staff and governors together very effectively and they provide strong leadership for a well-motivated team. This partnership is having a significant impact in improving teaching and learning at St Mary's. The leadership team knows the school's strengths and weaknesses and has diagnosed where improvements are needed. School data are analysed well and the resulting information is used to help pupils in their learning.

The governing body is supportive and encouraging to the school. It is involved in evaluating the work of the school. Assessment and tracking systems are now rigorous in

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enabling staff to identify quickly any pupil or groups of pupils that need additional support or help. This has ensured that any gaps between different groups, irrespective of their ethnicity or special educational needs and/or disabilities, have been reduced and reflects the school's good promotion of equality of opportunity. School leaders and governors have an understanding of safeguarding procedures and the school adopts effective practices in this respect across all areas of its work.

The school responds positively to parents' suggestions. Good partnerships that enrich the curriculum have been forged with local schools. The school is concentrating on forging strong links with its local community. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Wider links are developed through educational visits as are cultural links and experiences. Pupils' understanding of the different backgrounds represented in areas much further from the school, while increasing, is not always secure.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children have a satisfactory start to their schooling. When they start in the Nursery and Reception classes, children's skills are well below expected levels in all areas of learning. Children make satisfactory progress. In 2010, they left Reception with attainment in all areas below those expected for their age. Children are looked after well and their welfare needs met. They start the school day cheerfully by choosing an activity as soon as they arrive. They are given good opportunities to practise the sounds letters make, count how many children there are in the class, sing nursery rhymes and play with toys and other equipment. They develop their keyboard skills on computers. Behaviour is good and children get on well with each other and adults.

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The learning environment is very well organised indoors and outdoors. It provides children with an enjoyable range of activities. However, provision is satisfactory rather than good because there are not enough resources to provide a wide enough range of activities in each of the areas of learning. The newly appointed leader is working well with the team of teachers and teaching assistants and together they have developed plans for the future development of the indoor and outdoor environment. They plan together effectively to provide a good balance between the different areas of learning. However, there are too many teacher-led activities at present and not enough opportunities for children to choose their own to follow. Links with parents and carers are good. Induction procedures are effective and children quickly settle into school routines.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

There were a few written comments, most of which were very supportive of the school. In these comments, parents and carers find the school welcoming and the staff approachable and hard working. One parent wrote, 'On our first visit we were impressed by the warmth of the school. It was clear that the children were respected and valued. You see a lot of nurturing taking place and good communication between staff and parents.' The response rate to the questionnaire was low.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 74 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 451 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	47	37	50	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	46	40	54	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	36	49	37	50	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	43	39	53	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	42	42	57	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	45	39	53	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	30	49	66	2	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	23	31	43	58	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	32	44	59	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	39	38	51	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	39	37	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	26	35	44	59	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	47	38	51	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



25 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Southampton SO14 1LU

Thank you for making inspectors so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you about how you feel the school is preparing you for the future. Yours is a satisfactory school. There are a number of good things about your school that we liked.

- You enjoy school and get on well with each other.
- Your Year 6 prefects do a good job at playtimes stopping any of you from feeling lonely.
- You are working hard now and making good progress.
- You like the way adults in school look after you and you think they are doing a good job.
- You like your teachers and teaching assistants and try your best to please them.

We have asked your executive headteacher, teachers and the governing body to do three things to make your school better. These are to:

- help all of you to read, write and calculate better by making sure you understand what you have to learn
- improve the teaching by making sure you assess your work accurately and by letting you know how to improve your work
- train all senior teachers how to help you to learn quicker.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best.

Yours sincerely

David Shepherd

Lead inspector

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