

St Mary and St Chad CofE (C) First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124237
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359611
Inspection dates	24–25 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	124
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Bradford
Headteacher	Angela Lunt
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed seven lessons, sampled a further two, and saw five teachers teach. They also met with parents and carers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including teachers' planning, the school development plan, assessment, monitoring and evaluation records, records for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and safeguarding policies. Inspectors also analysed the responses to the 61 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- The evidence that the school has to support its view that pupils' learning and progress are good in Years 3 and 4, and how clear and well focused leaders and managers are upon raising attainment in this age group.
- The quality of provision, leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and how well prepared the children are for their work in Y1.
- As a result of the responses to inspection questionnaires, the quality of behaviour and how well the school deals with any incidents of poor behaviour.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average size school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. All of these proportions vary from year-to-year because of the small numbers in each year group. All pupils are taught in mixed-age classes by part-time staff. The assistant headteacher was leading the school, at the time of the inspection, in the absence of the headteacher. Before- and after-school clubs and a pre-school playgroup operate on the school site. They are privately run and therefore subject to a separate inspection. The school has Healthy Schools status.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Good leadership and management, and strong teamwork among the staff, have kept it moving forward since the previous inspection despite staff absences. This has ensured that the issues raised at the previous inspection have been addressed well. Teaching and learning are good and the well-planned curriculum ensures pupils know that what they learn in one subject can help them in another. Staff commitment to the pupils is evident in the additional time they give to the school to ensure pupils' learning is continuous in the classes they share. The school's self-evaluation is accurate as are the rigorous checks made on teaching and learning. All of this, together with an upward trend in attainment in Year 4, demonstrates the school has good capacity for sustained improvement.

Data held by the school, supported by lesson observations and pupils' work, show that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve well. Attainment is above that expected for the pupils in Year 4. The school has good systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress, and pupils are involved well in them. They know how well they are doing, and talk knowledgeably about being 'in different groups for different things' and being taught 'in all sorts of different ways' to suit 'the different ways we learn'.

Children start Reception with skills below those expected for their age. They learn and develop well because of the good provision and their attainment is similar to the level expected for their age by the end of their Reception year. However, access to outdoor learning is currently restricted.

Pupils behave well in and out of class. They enjoy school and their attendance is above average. They also have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy. They leave the school with good personal and academic skills, well prepared for the future. All of this is as a result of the good care, guidance and support the school provides for them. Despite the reservations of a small number of parents and carers about behaviour, comments such as, 'this is a caring, nurturing school' and children 'grow in confidence' are typical of those received during the inspection. Nevertheless, some parents and carers feel the school does not communicate well enough with them about how well their children are doing, and how they can help them to do better.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage further by giving children greater access to outdoor learning.
- Improve communication with parents and carers by:

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- ensuring that they receive good information about what and how well their children are learning, and what they can do to help their children to improve.
- clarifying for them the systems for managing pupils' behaviour.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The good progress that all pupils make, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, ensures that attainment is above average in Year 2 and above that expected for their age in Year 4. In Year 4, almost half of the pupils demonstrate many elements associated with Year 6 in their writing. They have a good command of vocabulary and use it well in their writing. This was evident, for example, as Year 4 pupils sought adjectives, adverbs and imperative verbs to make up a recipe for Fungus the Bogeyman's birthday cake. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are mostly accurate, and pupils set their work out well. For example, in Year 2, they wrote imaginatively, using paragraphs as they created their own versions of the Cinderella story. In mathematics, pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of number facts, and a good understanding of how to calculate in different ways. The work in their books also shows a well developed knowledge of shape, space and measure.

Pupils readily respond to the good opportunities they have to use their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills within topic work. They report that it is, 'really good linking subjects' because it helps them to learn better, and they readily discuss how they use their writing skills in, for example, science and history. Work in their books confirms that they do this well, and the gaps between boys and girls in writing are narrowing as a result.

The pupils' good behaviour contributes greatly to their learning and personal development. Pupils feel very safe and secure in school. Those spoken to during the inspection acknowledge that a small amount of bullying does occur but they know who to report it to and are clear that the school does not tolerate harassment of any sort. They are confident that any member of staff will help them overcome any concerns they might have. The pupils' good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle is evident in the award of Healthy Schools status, their healthy eating choices and in the large numbers that participate in the many sporting and exercise activities available to them. They thoroughly enjoy the 'groovy groovers' session at the start of each day, describing how it 'wakes our brains up'.

Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community, including the church and the village. In school, they accept responsibility well, for example, as school councillors and play leaders, showing a level of maturity that belies their age. They are reflective and caring, respectful of each others' similarities and differences, and have a developing awareness of different cultures in this country and abroad. They see everyone as equal, and say it is 'mean to call someone (names) just because they are different'.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

Learning objectives are shared with pupils in all age groups. Progress towards them is reviewed as lessons proceed, and adjustments made in response to pupils' different rates of learning. Thus, all pupils in each of the mixed-age classes, have work at the right level to ensure their good progress. The curriculum contributes to this because through linking relevant subjects together in topic work, and encouraging different methods of teaching, it makes learning exciting for the pupils. For example, as pupils donned white overalls to investigate micro-organisms, they rose to the challenge of using a wide range of scientific vocabulary to investigate what had caused the illness of a puppet character introduced by the teacher. Within this positive picture, however, the curriculum is not explicit enough about how progression in the basic skills required in each subject is to be assured. Pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Through 'wishes', teachers' marking sets pupils increasingly challenging targets to reach, and pupils respond well to this.

Occasionally in lessons, introductions are too long and pupils begin to fidget, but teachers mostly manage time and pupils' behaviour well. The school is a harmonious community, with a strong family feel, where pupils learn and play in a safe, attractive learning environment. Good quality academic and personal advice and guidance promote their learning and personal development well. The good support provided for pupils with special needs and/or learning difficulties, including those with behavioural difficulties, ensures

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good progress for all. The school does everything possible to promote good behaviour. Behaviour logs show that the school deals effectively with behaviour that falls short of its high expectations, including bullying, when brought to its attention, informing and involving parents and carers appropriately. Pupils praise the school's approach, reporting that staff work through specific issues with the whole class, preserving anonymity, while individuals are dealt with separately. Parents and carers are not as positive. The school recognises that it does not communicate sufficiently with parents and carers about how it deals with behaviour or about how well their children are doing. It is working on ways to improve this.

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 ambition and drive developed in the staff by the leadership team has resulted in strong teamwork across the school. This has enabled the school to keep up the momentum of improvement since the previous inspection, including during staff absences. Pupil progress meetings have raised accountability, as have the challenging targets set for staff and pupils. Governance is good. The governing body supports the school well and holds it to account for its outcomes. It gains its information through its strong presence in the school. The school's effective partnerships with external agencies and other schools ease pupils' transition to the next stage of their education and contribute to the good progress made by pupils with their learning and/or behaviour needs. The school's partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory because, although mostly positive about the school, parents and carers feel there are gaps in the school's communication with them.

The school promotes equality of opportunity well. It involves all groups of pupils in everything that it has to offer. It works hard to tackle any form of discrimination and instils in pupils good levels of respect for others. It has a good understanding of its own context and that of the community it serves. Through fund raising for different charities at home and abroad, the school's links with a school in Kenya and its developing links with a school in Chennai, the school is raising pupils' awareness of the global community in which they live. Its work in religious education and its developing links with a school with a different cultural make-up are introducing pupils to some of the different cultures in the United Kingdom. Overall, school leaders promote community cohesion well.

The school adopts recommended good practice in all areas of safeguarding. All training is up to date, including for child protection; relevant staff and governors are trained in safer recruitment and fire drills and risk assessments are carried out regularly. Pupils state

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confidently that they are 'always safe in school' and 'all doors are locked and teachers look after us well'.

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	3
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Reception children are safe and well cared for. They behave well and they play and learn happily together or alongside each other, as well as with the Year 1 pupils who share their class. Good induction procedures ensure that children, and their parents and carers, understand and follow established routines. Parents and carers are pleased with their children's progress, and links with them are good. Children's folders and journals, accompanied by photographic evidence, show good progress in early reading, writing and number skills. They also show that staff track, assess and record children's progress well and use the information to plan the next steps in their learning.

Children take turns and help each other, and they talk knowledgeably about their learning. For example, while testing different objects with a magnet, they readily explained that metal, not plastic objects, stick to a magnet. They have opportunities to select some activities for themselves, but occasionally spend too long in adult-led activities that limit opportunities for them to learn how to work independently.

Leadership and management are good. Staffing and building changes have been managed well, but provision is currently restricted by the lack of a secure, well resourced outdoor learning area. The school is currently working to create this area of provision. Staff try hard to compensate for the lack of provision by taking children outside in small groups to pursue specific aspects of their learning. For example, as they explored puddles on a rainy day, children also learned about floating and sinking, thereby building up early scientific knowledge and understanding.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The number of questionnaires returned by parents and carers was above average. These were mostly positive, with all parents and carers saying that their children enjoy school and the teaching is good. Some parents and carers had concerns about communication and staff absence. The inspection found that they had raised concerns about communication in their responses to the school's own questionnaire, and the school is looking at ways to improve communication with them and involve them more in their children's learning. With regard to the staffing issues, inspectors found that part-time staff communicate well with each other to ensure pupils' learning is continuous, and the school makes every effort to cover staff absences with in-house staff, or supply teachers known to the pupils to avoid disruption to learning. Some parents and carers had concerns about behaviour. As recorded elsewhere in this report, inspection findings are that behaviour is good and managed well by staff.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary and St Chad CofE (C) First 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 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 124 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	54	27	44	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	52	27	44	2	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	10	16	39	64	8	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	26	37	61	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	22	36	38	62	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	30	37	61	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	52	27	44	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)	21	34	28	46	3	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	39	31	51	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	25	33	54	7	11	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	25	36	59	4	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	14	23	34	56	11	18	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	36	36	59	0	0	1	2

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



26 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary and St Chad CofE (C) First School, Brewood, ST19 9BT

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school and for talking to me about your work. As you know, I came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning. I found that you are making good progress because you go to a good school, where you are taught well, and therefore reach standards above those expected for your age by the time you leave. Your good progress starts in the Reception class. You told me how much you enjoy school and that you feel safe and well cared for there. I noted your good behaviour, and was pleased to learn that you have every confidence in the staff to help you should you have any concerns, including about behaviour or bullying. You told me how much you like the new curriculum and the way in which it draws together your learning in different subjects. Those of you in the Year 3/4 class were certainly enjoying being mini-scientists as you explored micro-organisms. You clearly work hard in lessons and persevere with the tasks you are given to do. Keep this up and you will continue to do well.

There are some things the school needs to do to improve your learning even more.

Make more use of outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Keep in touch better with your parents and carers to tell them how well you are doing and how it deals with behaviour issues.

You can help by continuing to be happy learners and by keeping up your good behaviour. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell

Lead inspector

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