

St Mary's CofE (VA) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135057
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	363328
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Martyn Groucutt

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Owain Bell
Headteacher	Hilary Pritchard
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2009
School address	Stoney Lane Kidderminster DY10 2LX
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector. Eight lessons taught by eight different teachers were observed. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, senior and middle leaders, the School Improvement Partner, teaching assistants, pupils, parents and carers. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a selection of pupils' exercise books, the arrangements for safeguarding, and a range of policy and planning documentation.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The standards and achievement of pupils throughout the school.
- Evidence of improvement in attendance and parents' and carers' involvement.
- The ability of the curriculum to respond to pupils' needs and provide opportunities to develop basic skills in literacy and numeracy.
- Ways in which the school leaders disseminate information on pupils' progress to help teachers tackle underachievement.

Information about the school

St Mary's is smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. This is also the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those holding a statement of special educational needs. While the percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is around the national average the percentage of those who do not speak English as their first language is above average. The school has gained enhanced Healthy Schools status.

In the school's last inspection it was placed in special measures because significant improvement was needed in relation to pupils' achievement, levels of attendance, the curriculum and leadership and management.

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

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

St Mary's is now a good school that displays a confidence that its improvement can be sustained and extended into the future. Since the appointment of the current headteacher there has been a focus on raising standards of teaching and learning. The restructuring of the governing body and the support given by the local authority in training governors is now enabling them to provide effective challenge and to carry out their legal responsibilities effectively. The current senior leadership team has been in post for just over a year and its strategic vision for moving the school forward has united staff and created a positive desire to sustain improvement in order to help pupils maximise their potential. The whole staff is committed to this continued improvement. Data on pupils' progress is now being used to help teachers understand pupils' current achievement levels, the progress they make and the targets that can be set to help them maximise potential. It also supports those pupils who might be seen to be vulnerable, or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so they are making progress in line with their classmates. The ways in which the serious issues identified in the last inspection have been addressed, effective self-evaluation that now underpins school development planning and the focus on raising standards and achievement, means that the school now has a good capacity for sustained improvement into the future.

Over successive monitoring visits it has been clear that teachers are growing in confidence and belief that they can get the best out of their pupils. The local authority, which has provided very effective support to the school during its time in special measures, has acknowledged this by drawing on examples of good practice from St Mary's in key areas such as Early Years, inclusion and provision for special educational needs. Teaching throughout the school is now at least good and in Key Stage 2, which was identified as being inadequate at the last inspection, members of the senior leadership team lead by example and deliver outstanding lessons. The curriculum, identified as having serious weaknesses in Key Stage 2 in the last inspection, has been transformed, although it remains to extend this to Key Stage 1. Resources are focussed on raising achievement and the curriculum developments that have taken place since the last inspection have increased pupils' enjoyment of learning, with good outcomes that reflect good value for money. There is an equality of opportunity for all groups and individuals, enshrined in policy and practice. The core essentials of literacy and numeracy are not neglected in the thematic approach which increasingly characterises the curriculum. This much broader curriculum is now successfully engaging pupils and, because they enjoy learning, behaviour is good and learning is a positive experience. This was well amplified in the 'Do Something Different' days in Key Stage 2 in which teachers, teaching assistants, parents,

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community volunteers and pupils themselves led a range of exciting and stimulating activities.

Challenges remain: attendance remains low for example. However, parents and carers are now involved in the life of the school to a far greater extent and the contacts that have been developed are helping parents and carers to understand the ways in which they can work with the school to help their children. It is also the case that attainment remains low and there is a high pupil turnover. Pupils who have spent their whole school life at St Mary's often make good, or outstanding, progress from low starting points, but the school's overall performance is affected by pupils who join the school later and adversely affect overall achievement. However, everyone in the school can celebrate the progress they have made.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Senior leaders should ensure that planning for the future includes strategies to provide continuity in the event of changes in the management team so that the school is not adversely affected.
- Ensure that the curriculum developments seen in Key Stage 2 are embedded in good practice throughout the school.
- Maintain and extend efforts to engage with parents and carers who find it difficult to make regular contact with the school in order to raise rates of attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The attainment of all pupils in this year's intake was below or well below the age related expectations in every area of learning. Although by the time pupils leave school their overall attainment is still low, they enjoy their learning and this explains their good progress and achievement. The school now has effective data that shows good progress from initial starting points to when they leave for high school. This includes the high numbers of pupils identified as being potentially vulnerable, who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who speak a language other than English at home. Some pupils who enter the school late make less progress than their peers.

The school is a place of safety where pupils feel secure and can develop socially and emotionally. This is reflected in the excellent nurture provision that supports the development of those seen as being the most vulnerable in Key Stage 1. The school has high numbers of pupils identified as having social and emotional needs. Nonetheless, behaviour in class and around the school is good, supporting successful teaching and learning. The emphasis placed on living healthy lifestyles extends to whole families, demonstrated in the drop-in sessions run by the school nurse or the 'Come Dine With Me' sessions which promote healthy eating. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and its local community. During the inspection the 'Do Something Different' extended curriculum day saw several of the exciting learning opportunities being led by pupils themselves, for example. With its emphasis on developing social and personal skills as well as on academic ability, the school does much to help pupils develop skills for their future economic well-being. However, despite huge efforts and a big improvement since the last inspection, overall levels of attendance remain low. The school is aware that it needs to continue its attempts to work with parents and carers who do not

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make contact with the school readily. The school strives to develop the wider experiences of its pupils, illustrated by the successful work of a theatre group that emphasises moral and social understanding. Vibrant displays of pupils' work also illustrate the efforts that go into developing their spiritual and cultural lives.

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	4
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
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?

Teaching is good throughout the school and provides exciting learning opportunities for pupils. There is a strong rapport between adults and pupils, and a commitment to helping pupils maximise their potential. Lessons are planned well and adopt a variety of approaches to teaching and learning, including very effective use of the interactive whiteboards. The pace of lessons is good and pupils' enthusiasm was exemplified in a Year 2 lesson on the Victorians which used a range of domestic artefacts borrowed from the museum service. Pupils often show pride in their work. All teachers make good use of the range of data they have on individual progress and plan lessons to take different levels of attainment into account.

Classrooms provide a vibrant learning atmosphere with first class displays of pupils' work and a range of good resources. Teachers and teaching assistants plan and work together extremely closely. Because every pupil is so well known, the curriculum is planned to meet individual needs and pupils receive positive feedback on how well they are doing and their next steps in learning. A range of very effective partnerships supports and extends the

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curriculum at all levels, including play. Teaching is increasingly based on themes, and every half-term the 'Do Something Different' mornings provide excellent opportunities for Key Stage 2 pupils to practise and develop a range of learning and wider skills. The school has responded to the need to develop the Key Stage 2 curriculum, identified as inadequate in the last inspection, but has yet to make the same advances in Key Stage 1.

Care, guidance and support are good, including arrangements for safeguarding. There is a clear focus on meeting the social and emotional needs of pupils and their families. Targeted support benefits those who have additional needs and who are potentially vulnerable, and support when pupils leave for high school is excellent.

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 dynamic and visionary leadership of the headteacher is acknowledged by staff, parents and carers to be central to the great improvements seen since the last inspection. The senior leadership team has been together for just over a year and shows a clear grasp of the strategies needed to move the school forward, although it has not yet considered how to sustain this into the future should any of the current personnel move on. The entire school community has been energised and shows a tremendous commitment to providing successful education. Governance has been totally reorganised and governors now give effective support and challenge while fulfilling their legal duties. Links with parents and carers have been transformed for the better. They are engaging much more fully with the school, with increasing numbers becoming fully involved as volunteers or even as learners, such as in the 'Keep Up With Your Children' sessions in Year 3. However, despite considerable effort, a number remain hard to reach. A wide range of professional and learning partnerships sustain and develop the life of the school, such as in sports. These wider links contribute to the detailed arrangements for safeguarding in which the school works closely with the range of childcare professionals. The school's equality policies are embedded in good daily practice so that every pupil's needs are met. The school works well with communities at all levels.

Because leadership is effective, outcomes for pupils are good and resources are focused on maximising the achievement of all pupils, the school provides good value for money.

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter Nursery with age-related abilities well below those expected. As a result of the very good support they receive from teachers and nursery nurses they make good progress, although levels reached by the start of Year 1 remain low. Progress is carefully tracked and learning is maximised. The indoor and outdoor areas provide very stimulating learning environments that are utilised very effectively. The quality of education is good and staff work closely and effectively with parents and carers. Every family receives a home visit when a child starts, for example, and reading books are sent home regularly to encourage parents and carers to read with their children. Parenting skills are encouraged and regular contact is encouraged, such as through family sessions. Increasingly parents and carers are volunteering to work in the Early Years classrooms. The local authority highlights the effective provision through its best practice data base. Leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and focuses on providing exciting pre-school learning and play experiences. The effective leadership and management underpin the good quality of the provision and the progress that the children are able to demonstrate.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account: 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	2

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Stage

Views of parents and carers

Parent and carer questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so. However, parents and carers spoken to during the inspection, particularly those with older children, said that they could see that standards had risen and are pleased with the overall quality of their children's education. They show full support for the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

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.



11 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's CofE (VA) Primary School, Kidderminster DY10 2LX

It was a real pleasure to visit you again and to see the progress that you continue to make. You go to a good school and I am therefore able to say that it no longer needs special measures to help it to improve.

The headteacher has helped to create such a happy school where hard work is expected and you make good progress. You are obviously proud of your school and most of you work hard. Your behaviour in class and around school is good. Your teachers plan lessons that you enjoy and this is helping you to make good progress as you go through school. You feel safe, understand ways in which you can lead healthy lifestyles and learn skills that will help you later in life. Sadly, a few of you still do not attend regularly enough.

To make the school even better I have asked for a few things to be done.

The school should have plans to make sure that standards do not slip if any of the senior members of staff leave.

Some of the exciting things such as the 'Do Something Different' days should also be done in Key Stage 1, so you can all enjoy them.

Ways are needed to better attendance those of you who are sometimes absent without good reason.

If you always continue to do your best you will make progress. I wish you all the very best for the future. It has been a pleasure to meet you and find out about your school.

Yours sincerely

Martyn Groucutt

Lead inspector

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