

St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123537
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	359459
Inspection dates	20–21 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Clive Lewis

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sebastian Morgan-Clare
Headteacher	Anna Cook
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited six lessons, observed four teachers and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. The inspector observed the school's work, including a sample of pupils' books, teachers' planning documents, tracking and assessment data and analysed questionnaires from 24 parents and carers, 27 pupils and 7 staff.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work, looking in detail at the following.

- How effective is the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly planning and resourcing for the outdoor curriculum?
- Do pupils have sufficient opportunities to understand what life is like in different communities around the country and the world?

Information about the school

This is a very small school situated in a thinly populated rural area. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds, mainly from the village and a few outlying farms and all are from a White British background. They are taught in two mixed-age classes: an Early Years Foundation Stage/Key Stage 1 class and a Key Stage 2 class. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than national. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average and the proportion with statements of educational need is much higher than nationally. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status and is a designated Eco School.

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

St. Mary's CofE Primary is a good school. It has improved significantly since the last inspection and continues to do so under the strong leadership of the headteacher who provides a clear sense of purpose and direction. Through robust monitoring, she has ensured that teaching and learning have improved and clear priorities have been set for further improvement and, as a result, the quality of teaching across the school is good. Pupils achieve well. Although the very small year groups mean that attainment can vary greatly from year to year, attainment in the latest national tests at Year 6 were above the national average in English and mathematics. However, the school recognises that tracking shows that the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in mathematics across the school is currently below average. Children get off to a satisfactory start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make satisfactory progress. However, there are currently insufficient opportunities for children to freely explore their learning with purpose and challenge in the outdoor areas. Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully and regularly and their attainment assessed accurately. Older pupils know what their targets for reading, writing and mathematics are and marking is up to date and gives pupils useful guidance on how well they have done and what they need to do next.

The school enjoys the full-hearted support of parents and carers. They particularly like the positive family atmosphere. One parent wrote: 'We are extremely pleased with the variety and rigour of the education our son is receiving at St. Mary's. The school is an inviting, supportive and happy place.' They say their children enjoy coming to school and pupils agree enthusiastically. Pupils particularly enjoy the good range of after school extra-curricular activities provided. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and of the need for healthy lifestyles. A strong moral code is implicit within the school's ethos. This is reflected in pupils' outstanding behaviour and, in turn, has a very positive effect on the good progress pupils make in lessons. Pupils have a wide range of responsibilities in the school and, through the work of the school council for example, make a good contribution to the school community. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their good social skills and above average attainment equip them well for the future. The curriculum ensures that pupils receive a good variety of exciting activities and experiences through visits, residential stays and visitors to school. The school provides good care and support, especially for pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. Procedures to ensure the safeguarding of pupils are rigorous. The school has strong links with a wide range of partners which are very effective in promoting learning. The school has very good links with its local community but realises it could do more to develop pupils' awareness of those whose backgrounds are different to their own. The school has a good understanding of how well it is doing and what needs to be done next. Due to this good self-evaluation, and its recent record of improvement, it has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop further children's independent learning skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage by improving resources and provision to enable children to have free access to a good range of activities in the outdoor area.
 - Improve attainment in mathematics, particularly the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels, by systematically building on the good learning and progress that pupils are already making and by providing more challenging tasks for more able pupils.
 - Work to broaden the school's impact on community cohesion beyond the local community by extending the school's plan to promote the national and global dimensions and evaluate its effectiveness.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment on entry to the school can vary considerably year to year, but most children enter the Reception classes with skills that are broadly typical for their age. Pupils across the range of abilities and year groups make good progress and achieve well. Attainment is typically above average in reading and writing, although a smaller than average proportion of pupils is currently achieving the higher levels in mathematics. The school has successfully tackled previous weaknesses in writing by devising strategies to narrow the gap between attainment in reading and writing. Although teachers are now working hard to ensure the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels in mathematics matches the above average proportion achieving higher levels in English, more able pupils are not always suitably challenged by the tasks set. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective support provided by class teachers, teaching assistants and outside agencies.

Pupils understand what constitutes an unsafe situation and are confident that issues they raise will be dealt with promptly and effectively by the school. Pupils' exemplary behaviour makes a very positive contribution to the good progress they make in lessons. They work hard and conscientiously, both independently and co-operatively, without the need for constant adult intervention. Pupils are interested in the school's health promotion strategies and understand the main threats to their health and how they can be avoided. The school council are very proud of their school community and take their responsibilities very seriously. Pupils respect each others' needs and interests and are curious about the world around them, embracing new experiences enthusiastically. They are well-equipped for the future with their well-developed academic and social skills.

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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	1
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?

Teachers have strong subject knowledge which enthuses and challenges pupils, and contributes to their good progress. Lessons are characterised by good relationships between pupils and adults, and there is a positive atmosphere for learning across the school. In one Key Stage 2 writing lesson, the teacher motivated the pupils very well by informing them they were to be 'crime scene detectives' and by planting 'clues' in the school's 'forest area'. Pupils talked animatedly about the clues they discovered and what they might mean and this exciting input had a very positive effect on the writing they produced when they returned to the classroom. Good use is made of resources, including interactive whiteboards, to motivate pupils and enhance their learning. Support by skilled teaching assistants is well focused and makes an important contribution to the quality of learning. As a result of the school's good assessment procedures, teachers plan lessons well to meet the needs of the wide range of age and ability of pupils in each class. Teachers listen to, observe and question groups of pupils during lessons in order to improve learning. Good use is beginning to be made of peer assessment, with pupils evaluating their own and their friends' success with their work.

The curriculum is adjusted effectively to meet the needs of different ages and ability groups in the mixed-age classes, and a range of pupils with specific needs within the school. The daily half-hour phonics (the sounds that letters make), mental mathematics and handwriting activities across the school have contributed considerably to the

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improvements in pupils' progress in these areas. The curriculum is further enhanced by French lessons and extra-curricular enrichment opportunities are wide and varied, and are much enjoyed by pupils. Pupils receive a good variety of exciting activities and experiences through visits, residential stays and visitors to school. The school works with a variety of partners to provide a good range of sporting activities. The school's good and well-organised arrangements for the care of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities contribute significantly to their good development and well-being and support their learning well. Staff know and care deeply for all pupils and provide rigorous safeguarding and welfare procedures to help ensure the safety of all pupils, including those facing difficult situations.

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?

Since the last inspection the headteacher has consistently communicated to the staff her high expectations about continuing to improve provision. The result of this is clearly evident in the significant improvement that has been made. With the able support of a very enthusiastic, committed and well-motivated staff team the headteacher has identified and has rigorously and successfully tackled the areas requiring improvement. As a result, most aspects of the school are good and a few are outstanding. All staff work very effectively together and regularly take advantage of professional opportunities to enhance their own skills. The governing body has been revitalised since the last inspection and is now influential in determining the strategic direction of the school and fully and systematically involved in evaluating its work. Self-evaluation has identified all the key priorities for development. As a result of regular monitoring and support, teaching is good across the school and planning is founded on robust evidence and based on good quality assessment data.

The school has a highly positive relationship with parents and carers. The effective liaison with parents, carers and with other partners contributes significantly to improvements in pupils' achievement and well-being. The school promotes equality of opportunity in all its work and is constantly alert to any variation in achievement. It is active in devising initiatives to overcome any weaknesses. School leaders and governors have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures and adopt recommended good practice for safeguarding pupils across all areas of the school's work. The school promotes community cohesion within its own and the local community very effectively. It is aware, however, of the need to further develop pupils' understanding of those living in contexts which are different to their own and has begun to do this by establishing links with a school in a contrasting area of the United Kingdom and exploring links with a school in Uganda.

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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	1
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a satisfactory start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make satisfactory progress. Children clearly enjoy school. They settle into the routines well and play happily together and independently. They undertake a variety of whole-class and group activities and co-operate well when working with others. They delight in learning and seeing new things. Good relationships are being developed with parents and carers through daily contact. Pastoral care and welfare arrangements are good. Consequently, children are safe, well cared for and aware of how to be healthy. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well-supported and are integrated well into all activities. Adults have a sound knowledge of the learning, development, welfare requirements and guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage. They manage children well. As Reception children are taught in the same class as Year 1 and Year 2 pupils, the school ensures that the youngest children get regular opportunities to work in a more informal environment with weekly sessions in the 'forest area' and with even younger, pre-school children in the on-site playgroup. However, opportunities for Reception children to explore their learning independently in the outdoor area are currently reduced by restricted access from the Reception/Key Stage 1 class and limited resources for the outdoor curriculum. The school has recognised that this hampers the development of their independent learning skills and has plans to improve the accommodation and resources to make them more appropriate for the younger children.

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

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

The response to the questionnaire was better than that found nationally in primary schools; 80% of families returned a completed questionnaire. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers have very positive views of the school. All who responded feel, for example, that their children enjoy school, that the school keeps their children safe, that it keeps them informed about their progress, that it helps them support their children, that it encourages them to have a healthy lifestyle, that it takes account of their suggestions and that they are happy with their child's experience. Only in one area were any negative views expressed. A very small minority of parents and carers did not agree that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. The inspector looked closely at pupils' behaviour in and out of the classroom, during lunchtimes, assemblies and playtimes and found pupils' excellent behaviour to be a real strength of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's CofE 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 inspector received 24 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 42 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	79	5	21	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	20	83	4	17	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	71	7	29	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	71	7	29	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	79	5	21	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	67	8	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	67	8	33	0	0	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)	15	63	7	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	71	5	21	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	38	12	50	2	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	50	12	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	15	63	7	29	2	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	71	7	29	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.



22 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary School, Bucknell, SY7 0AA

I would like to thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. I very much enjoyed my visit. I enjoyed watching lessons and talking to some of you. You attend a good school that is a happy and friendly place. Outstanding features of your school are:

- your excellent behaviour, which is something you should all be really proud of, and
- the very strong partnership between the school and your parents and carers.

It is a good school because your headteacher and staff are leading the school well. They give you good support to enable you to learn and enjoy your lessons. They make sure that you understand how to look after yourselves and be healthy as well as how to keep safe. You told me that you really like your school and there are lots of things to do and enjoy. I agree with you. You work hard and try to succeed in all that you do. Well done!

I have asked your school to do two things that I feel will help to improve the school:

- ensure more of you achieve the higher levels in mathematics
- make links with schools in other parts of the United Kingdom and overseas so that you can learn more about the lives of children from different backgrounds to your own.

I wish you well in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Clive Lewis

Lead inspector

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