

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123524
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	359456
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Josephine Humphreys
Headteacher	Kathryn Mansell (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 15 lessons and observed seven teachers. They also met with parents, 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 improvement 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 questionnaires for pupils and staff, and the 75 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.

- How much progress have pupils made this year in view of the initiatives to improve writing, and has the improvement seen in mathematics last year been sustained?
- Given the higher than usual mobility within the school population, do teaching and the curriculum ensure sufficient progress for all pupils while they are at the school?
- How effective is the current acting leadership team in improving outcomes for all pupils?

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average sized school. The proportions of pupils joining or leaving at different times are high, mainly because the school serves a local Royal Air Force (RAF) base as well as the surrounding community. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including statements, is above average. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are proposals under discussion for the school to amalgamate with another local primary school. Following the recent departure of the previous headteacher, the school has an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher.

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

3

Main findings

The school is satisfactory. The acting headteacher and new leadership team have set a clear vision for improvement, and staff and the governing body are fully behind them in this. The school's self evaluation is accurate. Pupils are making better progress in writing because of staff training and collaboration with another school, and pupils' work in mathematics shows that the improvement from last year has been sustained. The focus on sharpening pupils' mental skills has contributed to this and forms part of every mathematics lesson. As recommended at the last inspection, pupils' targets have been simplified for them. However, pupils are not entirely clear about their targets or how to reach them. Teaching and learning are checked regularly, and subject leaders have time to monitor and evaluate their subjects and the curriculum. The information gained from this work is not always used as effectively as it might be to ensure that pupils' make best possible progress in all subjects. The sound foundation already established to improve teaching and learning and raise attainment, demonstrates that the school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Attainment is average in Reception, Year 2 and Year 6, as pupils, including those arriving at different times from the RAF base, make satisfactory progress from starting points that are in line with those expected for their age. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they are well supported, their targets are clear and their learning is assessed and tracked carefully. The information gained is used effectively to plan what they should do next. This good practice is not evident for all groups of pupils. As a result, more-able pupils in Years 1 to 6 do not always make the faster progress of which they are capable.

While there are strengths in assessment procedures that enable pupils' attainment to be recorded regularly, so that teachers are able to identify and support any pupils at risk of falling behind, the information is not collated sufficiently to provide a clear picture of progress over time. This makes it hard for staff to tell how different pupils are doing since they joined the school, which is often at different times. Teachers' marking is variable and does not always provide the step-by-step guidance pupils need to reach their targets. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, although some good and outstanding teaching was observed during the inspection. The curriculum is planned well to meet pupils' needs. It gives a purpose to writing, motivates pupils, and includes opportunities for them to determine some of their own learning.

Pupils behave well and they feel very safe in school. All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires said that the school keeps their children safe. Pupils also have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy. The school's good partnerships with parents and carers, other schools and external agencies contribute to pupils' learning and personal development and to their obvious enjoyment of school. This

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manifests itself also in above average attendance and is the outcome of the good pastoral care, guidance and support provided for all pupils.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more of the teaching and assessment consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring pupils understand their targets and improving marking so that it shows pupils what they need to do to reach them
 - adjusting work more often during lessons to suit pupils' different responses and levels of capability, especially the more-able in Years 1 to 6.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels by:
 - collating data more systematically, and using the information to analyse pupils' attainment and progress over time, especially for those who join the school at different times
 - establishing a greater rigour in monitoring and evaluation so that there is a sharper focus on enabling all pupils to make as much progress as possible.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have work at the right level for them, and they make good progress in lessons. One example of this was noted in a mathematics lesson, where their understanding of how to use their knowledge of adding tens to speed up other additions increased because of the wider range of resources and further step-by-step explanations given by support staff. More able pupils do not always make the faster progress of which they are capable. This is because their work is not always challenging enough. Pupils have targets but they do not always use them in lessons to further their progress. Progress in writing has accelerated this year, and some good progress was evident in pupils' books. Motivated by their topic work, pupils use different styles of writing to suit different audiences and purposes. Handwriting, spelling and grammar improve as pupils move through the school, but pupils sometimes forget to use these skills in all of their work. Almost all numeracy lessons observed began with a lively mental mathematics session, encouraging pupils to calculate quickly. Pupils enjoy these sessions, readily explain how they arrive at their answers, and learn many different ways to calculate. They are beginning to apply these skills increasingly well when solving problems in mathematics but have too few opportunities to extend them in other subjects.

Pupils engage enthusiastically in lively assemblies. The strong focus on their spiritual, moral and social development means they are reflective and caring towards each other, and polite and courteous towards visitors. Pupils relish taking responsibility, for example, as school councillors, whose contribution to school life includes securing a good range of play equipment that encourages pupils to be active. They readily engage visitors in conversation and help in the office during lunchtime. They know to fetch an adult should someone want access to school, and how to keep themselves safe. They make healthy eating choices and participate well in the many sporting activities available to them. They trust staff to help them should they have any concerns, and report that bullying is rare

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and quickly tackled, as is 'unkind name-calling'. Pupils gain a satisfactory understanding of cultural diversity.

Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community, for example, joining the local theatre group and participating in community events. Behaviour in class makes a good contribution to learning and pupils exhibit good collaborative working skills. They are proud of their school. Their sound basic skills and good personal skills ensure they leave the school adequately prepared for their future.

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	3
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	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?

In the best lessons, well-targeted questioning challenges the thinking of all pupils, from the least to the most able, as teachers use their good subject knowledge, and their knowledge of individual pupils, to move learning on at a fast pace. This was evident in an excellent mathematics lesson where pupils sang and recited tables, and revised how to add and subtract tens and hundreds quickly. Skilful adjustment by the teacher helped them to use this information to work out how to add or subtract, for example, nines and elevens rapidly, before moving onto solving problems using their new skills. At other times, pupils are kept together for too long, or teachers labour explanations instead of encouraging pupils to think for themselves. Although the pupils' inherent self-discipline means their behaviour remains good, the pace of learning slows in these sessions, restlessness creeps in and some pupils, especially the more able, do not learn enough.

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A good range of well attended extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors extend and enrich the well-planned curriculum and offer pupils worthwhile additional learning experiences. Pupils have a say in what they learn, making it more relevant for them. For example, following the Icelandic volcano eruption, they wanted to pursue why volcanoes and earthquakes occurred. They learned much about this and were able then to comment knowledgeably when the more recent Japanese earthquake and tsunami occurred. This approach is motivating boys and girls to write more. Numeracy skills are not as well promoted as writing skills in different subjects, although examples were noted in science and geography work.

Good engagement with parents and carers, and good liaison with the RAF, ensures pupils settle quickly into school life. The family atmosphere felt within the school contributes to this. When asked if they had 'buddies' to help introduce them to school life, pupils were adamant that they did not need buddies because everybody helped everybody else. Good systems are in place to identify and assess pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They are followed up with effective support programmes that enable the pupils concerned to make good progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

Under the acting headteacher, the new, enthusiastic leadership team has quickly gained the confidence of the staff in looking towards school improvement. Staff work as a team, help each other, and listen to and act on guidance from different sources. The joint writing policy, drawn up with the other school involved in the amalgamation talks, demonstrates this well. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored but here, as in the school development plan, there are insufficient steps set out to measure success in improving pupils' progress. The leadership team is already looking at ways of recording and analysing data better to give a clearer picture of progress. The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily, but, except for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, it does not always give enough attention to the progress of different groups as they move through the school. For example, despite the high level of mobility, the school does not analyse the progress of pupils who have been with it since Reception, separately from those who join at different times.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body has established its own action plan for improvement, and is well on the way to fulfilling it, for example in holding the school to account more fully. The information presented to the governing body is not always precise enough to give them the detail they need. Safeguarding procedures, including those for

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child protection, meet current government requirements. The school identifies dangers and fosters a realistic understanding of risk, and parents and carers, with whom the school engages well, appreciate this approach.

A wide range of well-fostered partnerships, such as those with the RAF base, different schools and external agencies, broadens pupils' learning experiences and promotes their personal and social development well. The school has a good understanding of the community it serves and the wider, village community. The Comenius project, which encourages the school to make contact with schools abroad, and links with the RAF are helping to raise pupils' awareness of cultures beyond the United Kingdom. Pupils' understanding of the range and diversity of cultures within the United Kingdom is more limited. Such gaps, were identified in a recent community cohesion audit completed by the governing body and it intends to fill these as soon as possible.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
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

Provision, leadership and management are satisfactory but they are improving rapidly. Having visited other settings, staff are using what was learned to help the children learn better. As a result, progress is also improving, and it is good in some areas. Children develop good personal and social skills. They work well on their own, in pairs and as a whole group. They listen attentively and thoroughly enjoy the many engaging activities prepared for them, such as when they dressed up, and dressed the teacher up, to create a fictional character and then describe it.

Children are becoming increasingly able to form letters and numerals accurately. In one session, more able children were observed correcting their own work as they realised they had written some numerals in reverse. In another, a group of more able children demonstrated good phonics skills as they read and answered questions shown to them by

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the teacher. Throughout, children find learning fun and they participate eagerly in everything offered to them.

Sound induction procedures introduce children and their parents and carers to the routines of school life. Children settle well. Effective links with parents and carers include good information about how to help their children. Children's progress is constantly assessed and tracked and the information is used effectively to plan the next steps in their learning. There is a good balance between adult directed activities and those that children can select for themselves. Staff are skilled at intervening in children's learning to extend their language and thinking skills. Children have planned access to outdoors for learning but the area is underdeveloped because children do not have spontaneous access to the outside throughout the day as an extension of the classroom. The school is working on improving this situation with staff training and their visits to other schools.

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 was an above average response from the questionnaire for parents and carers, and most are pleased with what the school does for their children. All those who expressed an opinion felt that the school encourages healthy lifestyles, that it deals well with unacceptable behaviour, and that it is well led and managed. Comments such as 'fantastic', 'great school', combined with praise for the support the school gives parents and carers as well as children, especially those with special educational needs and/or difficulties, were typical of those received. A small number of parents and carers voiced concerns about progress, or felt their children were not well enough prepared for the future. Those spoken to during the inspection voiced no such concerns. Inspectors found the school does care for its pupils well but it could do more to help all of them make better progress by improving the use of assessment information. The new leadership team has this in hand.

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 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 75 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 151 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	76	17	23	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	53	71	22	29	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	38	51	33	44	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	47	33	44	4	5	3	4
The teaching is good at this school	43	57	29	39	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	51	33	44	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	55	32	43	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)	37	49	28	37	4	5	2	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	59	23	31	3	4	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	48	35	47	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	49	33	44	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	45	60	27	36	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	61	27	36	1	1	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Shrewsbury SY4 4PF

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. It was a real pleasure to talk to you about what you do there, and it showed us how polite and mannerly you are, and how much you enjoy learning. As you know, we came to see how well you are doing and whether the school is helping you to make the best possible progress. We found your school to be satisfactory overall but that you develop good personal and social skills because of the good pastoral care, guidance and support you receive. What you told us showed that you have a good understanding of how to keep yourselves safe, fit and healthy, and that you really like taking responsibility for different things around the school. We noted that you are beginning to make better progress in writing and mathematics than in the past, but the school could do the following things to help you do even better.

Make sure that teachers use everything they know about how well you are doing, to adjust work to help you to make better progress, especially if you find the work too easy.

Make sure you understand and use your targets, and improve teachers' marking so that it always shows you what you need to do to reach them.

Ensure those who lead and manage different aspects of your work carefully check that you always make as much progress as you can.

We hope that doing these things will help you to enjoy learning even more. You can help by continuing to behave well and work hard, and by listening carefully to what you are told.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell

Lead inspector

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