

St Mary's Church of England (VC) Primary School, Banbury

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123094
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	359363
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Braybrook
Headteacher	Dawn Shilston
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who observed 20 lessons led by 12 different teachers and practitioners. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, parents and carers and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation. This included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school improvement plan, leaders' monitoring records and pupils' work. Questionnaires from staff and from 51 parents and carers and pupils in Key Stage 2 were analysed and their responses taken into account.

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

- The strength of pupils' progress in writing in Years 3 to 6 and whether current Year 6 pupils are on track to attain their targets.
- How well do the more-able pupils make progress in their learning?
- The extent to which teachers ensure that the pace of learning is brisk and how well they make sure that work is suitably challenging.
- The extent of the role that teachers with leadership responsibilities play in the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Information about the school

This average-sized school close to the centre of Banbury takes most of its pupils from the local community. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and an increasing proportion are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is almost double the national average. In addition, a small minority of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average, while an average proportion of pupils are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. There is after-school care for pupils. This is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection.

The headteacher left the school in July 2010 following a long period of absence caused by ill health. Following two occasions when the school had short-term acting headteachers, the current deputy headteacher was appointed as acting headteacher from April 2010. A new substantive headteacher has been appointed who will take up post in September 2011.

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

St Mary's provides a satisfactory standard of education. There are a number of notably strong aspects but there are also areas of weakness. Provision and pupils' progress are improving rapidly under the strong guidance of the acting headteacher. Working closely with senior staff, she has taken decisive action to tackle weaknesses and to deal with a legacy of underachievement that is reflected in the low attainment at the end of Year 6. The strong focus on strengthening teaching is becoming increasingly effective and it meets the needs of the differing groups of pupils. This has resulted in learning and progress improving rapidly, particularly in writing and mathematics. In consequence, because pupils' progress in writing has accelerated in Years 3 to 6, the previous gap between attainment in reading and writing is being closed. Achievement is satisfactory and strengthening.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make generally steady progress. However, their progress is hampered because staff's assessments of their work are not always accurate, which leads to activities not always being well matched to children's learning needs. Furthermore, the outdoor area, though improved, does not provide a sufficiently rich environment to support learning across all the required areas of the curriculum. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in the rest of the school, where teaching is routinely at least satisfactory, with an increasing proportion being better. Inconsistency in providing the right level of challenge linked to teachers spending too long talking, which slows learning, are the main factors that prevent teaching from being good across the school. The progress of Year 6 pupils is good. However, because their attainment was very low at the end of Year 2, their attainment is below average. In other year groups there is more time to catch-up, and pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 are now working at expected levels in writing and mathematics. In reading, many pupils are working at above expected levels.

Good levels of care and support ensure that there is a positive atmosphere throughout the school and lead to pupils enjoying school and having positive attitudes. This has also resulted in levels of attendance being lifted to broadly average levels. Pupils behave well and they are good ambassadors for the school. They are courteous, get on well together and enjoy taking responsibility, as seen in older pupils enjoying helping younger children during lunchtimes. Parents and carers are unanimous in saying that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps their children safe. The school provides a safe and secure environment and pupils report that they feel safe. Moreover, since there is a good quality personal and social education curriculum, pupils develop a good understanding of how to stay safe. This also helps to promote the pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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Good systems have been established for school self-evaluation and this means that staff have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Although systems for involving all the staff with responsibilities in the monitoring of provision and pupils' progress are relatively recent, they are already embedded across the school, with these staff making a good contribution to school self-evaluation and school improvement. Senior staff and governors have successfully demonstrated through strong improvements in teaching and learning, which are based on accurate monitoring, that there is satisfactory capacity for building on these firm foundations to secure sustained improvement.

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?

- Lift the quality of teaching and learning from satisfactory to good by:
 - ensuring that work is consistently challenging for all groups of pupils
 - increasing the pace of learning to that of the best by limiting the length of time that teachers spend in introducing lessons
 - embedding the improvements in pupils' mental calculation skills in all year groups.
- Raise the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - providing training for staff to ensure that assessments of children's learning are more accurate and are then used to match future activities to their needs
 - strengthening the quality of the outdoor learning area to ensure that there is a good range of activities across each of the required areas of learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Achievement is satisfactory and strengthening. Boys and girls and groups of all abilities make satisfactory and rapidly improving progress in lessons. The progress of more-able pupils has been accelerated particularly well after a period in which there has been underachievement for this group in both English and mathematics. Progress has improved notably, too, in mathematics. This is because there has been a close concentration on strengthening pupils' mental calculation skills, which previously were weak. Pupils' enjoyment of mathematics was evident in a good quality Year 1 lesson where pupils working in small groups were practising adding one-digit numbers to one- or two-digit numbers. The pupils thoroughly enjoyed the lesson and the more able were already operating at levels expected of pupils at the end of Year 2. Support from the teaching assistant boosted learning well. The many pupils who are at an early stage of learning English are supported particularly well by a skilled group of teaching assistants. Owing to the good support, these pupils enjoy learning and they make rapid progress in their English speaking and listening skills so that they soon become confident in speaking English with their classmates.

Better teaching ensures that pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes to their learning. Pupils are articulate and confident in answering questions. They enjoy the opportunities that are provided for them to take responsibility. School councillors are enthusiastic,

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though the school knows that pupils' opportunities to voice their views are underdeveloped. Pupils are particularly proud of the significant amounts of money that is raised for a range of charities. They have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle; this is promoted well by the school. By the time they reach the end of Year 6, pupils are secure, have well-developed social skills and are reflective individuals. They are prepared appropriately for their next steps in education and life beyond.

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	4
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	3
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	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	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?

Pupils say that their teachers make learning fun and they appreciate the way in which teachers make lessons increasingly exciting. Pupils who need additional help are suitably supported and this ensures that they improve their skills steadily. Teaching is improving and this means that pupils are learning more quickly than in the past. Throughout the school, teachers have positive relationships with the pupils and they manage them well. This results in classrooms having a calm and purposeful atmosphere and a pleasant learning 'buzz'. The pace of learning is generally brisk but sometimes it is too slow because teachers spend too long explaining tasks. In Years 1 to 6, there has been a marked improvement in the use of assessment information to ensure that work is generally matched well to pupils' needs.

There are strengths in the curriculum, although it is satisfactory overall because it promotes basis skills soundly in most areas. Staff are increasingly ensuring that subjects

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are linked together securely to provide meaning and purpose for learning. In a good quality Year 4 lesson, for example, pupils enjoyed researching moon vehicles using the internet before planning and designing vehicles for themselves. These pupils' information and communication technology skills are well developed and this aided their learning considerably. The arts, particularly music, are promoted well, with many pupils enjoying learning an instrument. Pupils also say that they appreciate the good range of additional activities, such as trips and visits. These too, enliven learning.

The good levels of pastoral support ensure that there is sensitive support for pupils and families whose challenging circumstances may make them vulnerable. The homeschool link worker, for example, provides good support and she recently completed a well-received transition workshop for Year 6 pupils and parents and carers. The good quality programme of support for Pakistani mothers who are learning English enables them to understand the school's approach to teaching reading. Many pupils enter the school speaking no English and these pupils say that they are made welcome in the school; the good programme of 'buddying' helps them to settle very quickly.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has recently gone through a turbulent period of leadership. The school is now emerging from this period of significant transition with a clear sense of purpose. Teamwork is strong and the ambition and drive for improvement is increasingly evident throughout the school. Senior staff have a good understanding of priorities and with well-targeted support from the local authority, they are tackling weaknesses with determination. The impact of this can be seen in the steady improvements in teaching and the systematic manner in which teachers are now held to account for their pupils' learning. This is aided by the robust systems and close tracking of pupils' progress.

Governance is satisfactory and improving. Governors are keen and enthusiastic and they recognise that in the past, they have been over-reliant on senior staff for information rather than finding out for themselves. They now have a suitable programme to check provision and progress and this is enabling them to be in a stronger position to challenge as well as support the school. Governors ensure that all statutory regulations are met and they are assiduous in ensuring that the pupils are safeguarded well. Staff vetting procedures are robust and recommended good practice is adopted in all issues of health and safety.

Although no discrimination is tolerated and the school operates as a harmonious multicultural community, the school's promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. This

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is because although the use of data to check that all groups of pupils do equally well is developing quickly, and provision is strengthening, there is still a history of underachievement. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. There are well established links within the town, with pupils enjoying taking part in local events such as the Banbury music festival. There are particularly fruitful links with a local charity for young people with disabilities, which has included pupils helping to design a play area. Pupils' experience of other cultures is aided by visits to a local mosque, including the imam leading assemblies, and to the gurdwara. The school recognises that the promotion of community cohesion internationally is at an early stage, even though links are developing with a school in Ghana. Procedures for evaluating the impact of the school's planned actions are not yet well developed.

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

On entry to the Nursery year, children's skills and abilities are typically below expected levels. They make satisfactory progress in learning. Staff have warm and positive relationships with the children and this, when linked to the efficient arrangements to introduce children to the Foundation Stage Unit, ensures that they settle quickly and well and that their social and emotional development is promoted effectively; consequently, children become secure and confident. Children behave well and enjoy learning. Their social development is further promoted because the staff ensure that there are ample opportunities for children to make choices for themselves and to play and learn in small groups. Generally activities are well chosen to support children's learning across all the required areas, particularly in the indoor learning areas. Enjoyable story sessions and exploration of the initial letter sounds are enabling the children to begin to develop early reading skills and awareness of letters and sounds. Similarly, mark-making opportunities and modelling of correct letter formation enable the youngest children to write their

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names appropriately. However, overall progress is hampered because assessments of children's learning are not always sufficiently accurate and this means that activities are not always challenging enough to meet children's needs. Although the accommodation outdoors is spacious, staff do not provide activities of sufficient quality and breadth across the required areas of learning to secure consistently good progress in learning.

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

Parents and carers are supportive of the school. Those who returned the questionnaires were unanimous in saying that their children enjoy school and the school keeps their children safe. Furthermore, the very large majority said that overall they are happy with their children's experiences at the school. There were many supportive comments, particularly from parents who had recently moved their children to the school. These are reflected by the parent or carer who wrote: 'My children moved to this school in October and they have blossomed. They are very happy and the change in them is marked. Moving my children to St Mary's was the best choice I have made for them.' There were further positive comments about the leadership of the acting headteacher, with a number of parents or carers recognising the improvements that have come about in the last year. There were areas where a few parents were not so positive. These include the school not doing enough to help parents and carers to support their children's learning and or meeting their children's particular needs. These matters were investigated. The arrangements to support parents and carers in educating their children are similar to those typically found and, in some areas, stronger. For example, parents and carers of families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are supported particularly well. While the school has improved its provision and is accelerating pupils' progress, senior staff recognise that, at present, not all children's particular needs are met, although this is improving.

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 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 201 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	55	23	45	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	65	18	35	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	26	51	19	37	4	8	2	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	41	24	47	4	8	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	20	39	25	49	5	10	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	37	23	45	8	16	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	41	29	57	1	2	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)	17	33	28	55	3	6	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	37	22	43	8	16	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	33	28	55	3	6	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	33	26	51	6	12	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	15	29	30	59	6	12	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	47	21	41	4	8	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



30 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Banbury OX16 2EG

I am writing to thank you for your help when we came to inspect your school and also to tell you what we found. Thank you for talking with us.

Yours is a satisfactory school, which means that some things are done well and other things could be improved. You told us that you enjoy school and you feel safe because the staff look after you well and take good care of you. We agree and we were impressed with your behaviour in lessons and in assembly. Your teachers try hard to make lessons interesting for you; your lessons are at least satisfactory, with some better. This means that your learning and progress are satisfactory and improving. You told us that you enjoy all the trips and visits that you make, and also your residential visit. These things help to make sure that you enjoy learning. We think that your headteacher is doing a good job and she is helped by all the staff to make your school even better.

We have asked your headteacher and staff to take some action to make sure that improvements continue. We have asked them to make sure that your teachers give you work that challenges you because this will aid your progress. In a few lessons, your learning is slowed because teachers spend a little too long on introducing lessons, so we have asked that introductions are always brisk. Even though your calculation skills have improved, we have asked for teachers to focus even more on these. Finally, we have asked for some improvements for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage Unit. We have asked that the staff have some more training in making sure that their assessments are accurate. We have also asked for the staff to make sure that activities in the outdoor spaces always cover all the required areas of learning.

We hope that you continue to enjoy school and learning.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector

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