

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121547
Local Authority	York
Inspection number	363941
Inspection dates	12–13 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Terry McDermott

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	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Cannings
Headteacher	Mrs Ruth Ellis
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Nine lessons were observed. Six teachers were seen teaching, most of them twice. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its methods for tracking pupils' progress, a range of school documents, including its policies, minutes of governing body meetings, monitoring records, a sample of pupils' work, and reports from the School Improvement Partner. Forty-three responses from parents and carers to the Ofsted questionnaire were received and considered, along with questionnaires completed by staff and pupils.

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

- How well the school promotes the achievement of different groups of pupils.
- How effectively the curriculum avoids repetition in mixed-age classes.
- The extent to which leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school since very few areas for improvement are identified in its self-evaluation.

Information about the school

This is a much smaller than average-sized primary school. It serves a small village and the surrounding rural community. The school is over-subscribed and many pupils travel several miles to attend. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is well below average. All pupils speak English at home. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. All classes are mixed-age. The school holds several awards, including Active Mark, and it has Healthy School status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Many areas of its work have improved markedly since the last inspection. These now outstanding features include: pupils' achievement; their behaviour and personal development; the curriculum; the care, guidance and support all pupils receive; and some aspects of leadership and management. The school is succeeding in meeting its aspirational motto: 'Making Learning Irresistible'.

Pupils join the Reception class with skills that are usually above those found in children of their age. They make good progress through the school, and their attainment when they leave at the end of Year 6 is high. The school provides a welcoming and very exciting environment for learning. Pupils enjoy coming to school because 'we get to do so many different things'. This is reflected in their high attendance. They are quite sure that bullying does not exist and they insist that they are completely safe. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

The quality of teaching and learning over time is good. This is clearly demonstrated in the school's accurate and reliable tracking system, in pupils' books and in the high standards pupils reach at the end of Year 6. The quality of teaching seen in lessons during the inspection was good. Some excellent lessons were observed. Occasionally, in mixed-age classes where there is a wide range of ability, teachers give explanations that are lengthy and only relevant to a proportion of the class. This slows the pace of learning for others. The curriculum is very well planned to ensure that mixed-age classes avoid repeating work from one year to the next. It takes every possible advantage of the school's rural location to give pupils actual hands-on experiences of the real world. Pupils say that this is what makes learning so much fun. The care, guidance and support provided for all pupils, including those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, is central to their outstanding achievement. Adults in the school know pupils and their families very well, and are quick to discern when pupils may be having difficulties. The wide range of expertise in the school enables it to provide immediate, effective, and sympathetic assistance as required.

There is a strong team spirit and sense of pride in what has been achieved to date. Whole school self-evaluation is accurate, because it is linked to learning outcomes for all pupils. Sometimes, when monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in lessons, leaders at all levels overestimate the amount of learning taking place. Nonetheless, the school knows what to do sustain its upward trajectory. When coupled with the very successful actions the headteacher has taken to bring about improvement since the last inspection, this means that the school's capacity to improve further is outstanding.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching, so that even more lessons are good or better by:
 - ensuring that teachers' explanations in lessons are always concise and sharply-focused upon the full range of learning needs in the class
 - leaders at all levels obtaining a consistently accurate view of how much learning is taking place in lessons.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or those from minority ethnic backgrounds, make good progress in lessons, and over time. Pupils usually enter Reception class with skills that are above those normally expected, though this can vary from year to year due to small cohort sizes. In 2011, the school's comprehensive and accurate assessment and tracking system clearly shows that all pupils in Year 6 have made good progress from their starting points. Standards observed in Year 6 by inspectors were exceptionally high, at the higher Level 5 in both English and mathematics.

Pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning and their behaviour is excellent. This ensures that lessons run smoothly. They listen closely to each other's opinions and ideas, knowing that different perspectives will deepen their understanding. They can be trusted to work independently and productively. This was seen in all class groupings, from Reception/Year1 to Years 5/6. Their concentration is good and their confidence grows as they successfully meet teachers' high expectations. This was seen to excellent effect in a Years 1/2 science lesson when pupils were investigating forces, and were given the task of resisting the effects of gravity. Theories were developed, models built and tested, successes and failures shared. The level of sustained concentration was remarkable, as was the understanding gained from this memorable learning experience.

Pupils enjoy coming to school because they feel safe here. They can confidently explain why this is so. Pupils react with genuine surprise when asked about bullying, saying firmly that there simply isn't any. However they do know what to do should it occur. They are confident that the school deals quickly, fairly and effectively, with any issues that might arise. They are fully aware of the dangers they may face outside school and what steps to take to avoid them. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lives and can describe with accuracy and no little enthusiasm the positive effects of exercise and a balanced diet on the body. It is clear from pupils' discussions that they are very proud of their school, and they feel that their opinions are listened to. Their involvement in activities in the immediate local area is strong. They are keen to represent the school in a wide range of sporting and cultural activities. Their understanding of the different cultures across the globe is good, though their first-hand knowledge of multicultural Britain is more limited. They understand the significance and major features of other faiths, and raise significant amounts of money for charitable causes. When they leave school at the end of Year 6, pupils are mature and confident young citizens, with high levels of attainment. They are outstandingly well-prepared for the next stage of their education and their lives.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
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?

Classrooms are colourful and totally unique places, in which every available bit of limited space is innovatively used. Examples of pupils' work in English, mathematics, art, geography, music and other subjects are prominently displayed to motivate and inspire. All lessons are characterised by the excellent relationships between pupils and adults. The large majority of lessons move forward rapidly from task to task, ensuring that pupils pay close attention and learn well. Occasionally the pace of the lesson and the learning slows when all pupils receive the same exposition or explanation. Pupils then sit quietly and patiently waiting for the next task. Scrutiny of pupils' books shows that marking is regular and often gives clear advice on how to get better. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and play an active role in supporting different groups of pupils to make good progress over time. This is particularly the case in ensuring that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have access to everything that the school has to offer, and gain the same benefits as all other pupils. Thought-provoking extension work for higher-attaining pupils is almost always available.

Besides its meticulous attention to building pupils' core skills, the curriculum has a strong focus on inspiring pupils' curiosity, as well as building their respect for the individual and the environment. It combines these with a wide range of extra-curricular enrichment activities which, pupils' say, they enjoy immensely, and in which most participate, often with support from families.

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The school knows the pupils and their families very well. Regular consultations underpin the strong and positive links between school and home. Arrangements for supporting those pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are excellent. The school consistently goes the 'extra-mile' to make sure that all pupils are given every opportunity to be happy and to achieve their best. As one parent noted 'All of my children are very different, and each one has been, and is, treated as an individual'. Transition arrangements are managed well and ensure that pupils transfer into school, from one class to another, and on to secondary education, with the minimum of disturbance or misunderstanding. Together, the outstanding curriculum and high level of care guidance and support that pupils receive, lead directly to the impressive outcomes for pupils in this school.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Clear-sighted, purposeful and knowledgeable leadership, team spirit and pure hard work are the reasons behind this school's improvement. The headteacher strives continuously to improve all pupils' learning opportunities. Her commitment and dedication are infectious, and this ensures that staff have a common sense of direction, and feel part of a successful team. Leaders at all levels are fully involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. However, their evaluations sometimes overestimate the amount of learning that has taken place. Nonetheless, the quality of teaching is currently good and improving, and pupils' learning over time is good. Everyone is open-minded and trying hard to make the school even better. There is no hint of complacency. The school promotes equality highly effectively for all pupils through its detailed monitoring and tracking, and its exemplary support. There is no evidence of any sort of discrimination or oppression. Safeguarding procedures are good, and given a high profile. This explains why pupils are so confident about feeling safe. Governance is good. Members of the governing body support the school well and give good attention to the welfare of pupils and staff. Its systems for holding the school to account for its work are robust, though detailed knowledge and understanding of the progress all groups of pupils make is not as quite as secure. Community cohesion is promoted well within and outside the school. There are good partnerships with local schools and community groups, and these links are extended well abroad to St Paul's Anglican School in Begoro, Ghana. The school is working to extend its links with a greater range of different schools within Britain.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Close links with parents and carers help children to settle into the school very quickly. Parents and carers often support and encourage their children by coming into school. They value what the school offers and recognise the good progress the school helps their children to make. Good teaching, with a strong emphasis on building communication and computational skills, ensures that children make consistently good progress from their starting points in all areas of learning. There is a good range of opportunities for children to choose their activities and develop the skills for independent learning both inside and outdoors, but the balance between self-chosen and teacher-led activities is not well-established. Nonetheless, children gain a sense of curiosity and enjoyment in learning which stays with them as they get older. They can sustain their concentration well, sharing their thoughts, ideas, and toys as they work and play in complete harmony.

Leadership and management are good. The different skills of adults are deployed well to give consistently good outcomes for all children. Accurate assessment of what children know and can do enables adults to plan interesting learning opportunities. Adults also use this information very well to support those children who might require additional help. Resources are good and used particularly well in imaginative role play. Staff take good care of children to ensure their health and welfare.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers responding to the Ofsted questionnaire was much higher than is usual for primary schools. Respondents were unanimously positive in their responses to the majority of questions, including being happy about their children's experiences while at the school. A very small minority of parents and carers raised some individual or particular concerns, including the effectiveness with which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. During the inspection, no unacceptable behaviour was observed either in classrooms or out of doors.

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 Voluntary Controlled 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 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 102 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	72	12	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	79	8	19	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	37	27	63	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	53	19	44	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	70	13	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	47	23	53	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	63	16	37	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)	24	56	19	44	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	51	18	42	3	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	51	18	42	3	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	42	22	51	2	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	31	72	10	23	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	67	14	33	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	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.



14 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, York, YO23 3PD

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when we visited your school recently. We were very impressed with your excellent behaviour and your very good attitudes to learning in lessons. We noticed how trustworthy you are when working on your own.

We found that St. Mary's is an outstanding school. It has several outstanding features which lead to some excellent outcomes for you. The most important of these features are the outstanding curriculum and the excellent care guidance and support the school provides. These have improved a great deal in recent years due to the excellent leadership of your headteacher. Together these ensure that several aspects of your personal development, your achievement and the academic standards you reach, are outstanding.

However, there are still some things which the school could do even better. So I have asked the adults in school to do the following to help you learn even more quickly than you do now:

- make sure that your teachers always explain very clearly what they want you to learn about
- check more closely that each of you is learning as much as you can in lessons.

You can help in this by telling your teachers, politely of course, if you find work a little too easy. Please continue to be the happy, hard-working and sensible young people you already are. Good luck to you all for the future.

Yours sincerely

Terry McDermott
Lead Inspector

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