

St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116799
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	338892
Inspection dates	21–22 September 2009
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Oldman
Headteacher	John Moynihan
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2007
School address	Credenhill Hereford HR4 7DW
Telephone number	01432 760408
Fax number	01432761418
Email address	admin@credenhill.hereford.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	21–22 September 2009
Inspection number	338892

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons, and held meetings with staff, pupils, parents and the Vice Chair of Governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at the data on pupils' performance, including their current progress, safeguarding records, plans for the future, and records of the school's own monitoring of its performance. The responses to 75 parent questionnaires were considered, alongside responses from staff and pupil questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the reasons for the apparent decline in standards in Year 2 and whether pupils are making enough progress in Years 1 and 2
- whether more-able pupils do as well as others, and boys make as much progress as girls
- whether assessments in the Early Years Foundation Stage are providing a sufficiently accurate basis for teachers to plan appropriately challenging work.

Information about the school

St Mary's draws its pupils from a number of areas, some of which have relatively high levels of mobility, so the school has many pupils joining or leaving part way through their primary education. Around 12% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Ten per cent of pupils currently have special educational needs and/or disabilities, although this is lower than in previous years, and just under 2% have a statement of special educational needs. Under 1% of pupils come from a minority ethnic background.

The number on roll has increased significantly since the school was last inspected. The school shares the site with two playgroups that are not managed by the governing body. The school holds the Activemark, Artsmark, SEN Quality Mark and Healthy Schools awards, as well as an award for financial management.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

'I have been to five different schools, but this one is the best' is the way that one pupil summarised her feelings about St Mary's. Standards vary from year to year because so many pupils join part way through their education. However, regardless of when they join, they make good progress during their time at St Mary's. Pupils leave well prepared for secondary school and later life, having made good progress not only in English, mathematics and science, but also in information and communication technology. Parents are also very impressed. They feel exceptionally well informed and welcomed as a result of the outstanding partnership developed between them and the school. The before-and after-school clubs provide a good resource for parents because arrangements are very flexible in order to meet their needs.

The school has maintained the good quality of education found at the previous inspection, and improved in key areas. Pupils' attitude to living healthy lifestyles is now outstanding for example, and standards in writing, one of the main areas for improvement at the previous inspection, are much improved. The school's leaders, including governors, have clearly shown that they have good capacity to continue such improvement. The school has good systems for ensuring pupils new to the school settle quickly and are accurately assessed. This allows teachers to place them in groups with pupils of similar ability where they receive work which they find demanding, but achievable. Progress is slower for all pupils in Years 1 to 6 at the start of lessons when they are not in their groups, and this is the main factor that prevents them making outstanding progress. Too often the introduction goes on for too long and the activities are the same for all pupils in the class, which the more able sometimes find too easy, and the least able find confusing. Teaching assistants, who provide good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, often play little or no part in these introductions. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage spend much less time as a class at the start of lessons. They quickly move to different activities, so their progress is more rapid at the start than that in other year groups.

The school's good systems for self-evaluation ensure leaders have an accurate picture of its effectiveness. The progress of pupils is carefully tracked as they move through the school, and then analysed to check for any differences by gender. This has allowed the school to draw up plans to tackle any differences, although the plans do not provide measurable targets by which their success may be judged. Nevertheless, actions taken have reduced considerably the gap between the progress of boys and girls. The progress of other groups, such as those from the three different areas served by the school, is not yet analysed. Checks on teaching provide staff with a clear picture of what they do well and what could be even better. The headteacher has forged them into a strong team with high morale and a determination to make the school an even better place for pupils.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress made by pupils from good to outstanding by:
 - reducing the time spent working as a whole class at the start of lessons
 - ensuring that the tasks that pupils carry out during the introduction to lessons are better matched to their ability
 - making full use of teaching assistants' expertise.
 - Drive the school's improvement at an even faster rate by:
 - analysing the performance of more groups of pupils
 - using the information gained from such analyses to draw up plans for improvement that have easily measurable targets.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Standards are currently average in Year 6, but they vary across the school and from year to year. Standards were low in Year 2 last year, for example, because over half the class joined part way through Year 2 and had not made the good progress that pupils who had been at the school in Year 1 had made. Observations of lessons showed that pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2, and in all other years. Having such a transient population makes long-term target setting very difficult, so the school sets targets for individuals based on their standards when they join the school. The school's records show that pupils make consistently good progress, with almost none failing to meet their target and around one in four exceeding it by a considerable margin.

In the past there have been differences in the progress of boys and girls, and more-able pupils have not always achieved as well as others. The school has worked hard to address these issues and inspectors' observations confirmed the school's view that all groups now learn at the same rate. Almost all parents responding to the questionnaire said that their children enjoyed school. This was evident in lessons where pupils concentrated well and worked hard on tasks that they often found exciting. They particularly liked tasks which made them think, and were rightly very pleased when they got the right answer to a difficult problem in mathematics, for example. Attendance is currently average. This is lower than in previous years, and reflects the school's understandable policy of allowing children of service families to take a holiday in term time with their parents when their fathers return from a war zone. Pupils' outstanding attitude to health is reflected in the way they live their lives. Healthy school lunches are enjoyed by many, while lunch boxes rarely have any unhealthy contents. The vast majority of pupils take part in extra sporting activities. Throughout the school, pupils get on well with one another and their teachers, demonstrating pupils' good social development. Pupils' moral development is also good. They behave well in lessons, with only a few examples of silliness at playtime where they do not always think about the safety of others, for example, when rushing around.

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

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	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	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	2
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?

Teachers' planning is thorough and makes good use of the information gained from assessments to set work that is well matched to pupils' ability, although there are some variations in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Lessons in Years 1 to 6 follow a similar pattern of an introduction from the teacher, followed by pupils working in small groups, according to their ability. The introductions usually contain instructions for each of the groups. All pupils have to listen to the tasks for all groups when they only need the instructions for their own. This confuses pupils of lower ability, who do not understand the instructions for other groups, while other pupils get a bit bored waiting to start work. When in groups, pupils' progress is particularly good. More- able pupils are provided with work that really tests their understanding, often demanding that they apply newly learnt skills in an unfamiliar context. Expectations are equally as high for other pupils, with those in need of extra help receiving well focussed support from teaching assistants so they are able to learn at the same rate as others.

The curriculum is planned well in the short, medium and long term to build progressively on what pupils already know, understand and can do. The chosen commercial teaching scheme for mathematics does not offer enough challenge for the most able, but teachers are overcoming this drawback by producing materials of their own while they wait for a new scheme to arrive. The curriculum in the Reception class involves children in planning and the partnership with playgroups is being developed so as to extend each settings'

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

understanding of how provision across the Early Years Foundation Stage can be improved. One of the school's great strengths is the way that it supports pupils who are new to the school, especially those who may be vulnerable in some way. Such pupils are paired with 'buddies' to ensure they settle quickly, and assessments are carried out as soon as they arrive, rather than waiting for records from their previous school, so they can be given appropriately demanding work straight away.

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?

Accurate self-evaluation is at the heart of the school's good capacity to improve. It allows the school's leaders to identify where provision can be enhanced and aids the schools' successful drive for improvement. Development plans make clear to managers and staff at all levels what they need to do, so all are pulling in the same direction and new staff know what is expected of them. The current plan rightly identifies provision for pupils' understanding of the global community as an area for development, in order to improve this part of community cohesion to the already good level of provision for local and national aspects. The trips to inner city areas are particularly effective at developing pupils' understanding of how others live their lives. They form part of the school's successful efforts to promote tolerance and tackle discrimination both in and out of school. The results are seen in the complete lack of racial incidents in the school and in how safe pupils say they feel. Good efforts are also made to ensure that no group of pupils makes less progress than others. This is already clear in the analysis carried out by the school's managers, although not all groups are covered. Governors play a good role in questioning the headteacher and holding the school's managers to account, although the part they play in checking the quality of teaching is more limited. Safeguarding procedures are effective. The school has robust systems for checking that those working with children are suitably qualified and has anticipated changes to regulations by already having carried out checks on all governors. Policies are up to date and reviewed frequently, but a clerical error in the child protection policy means that some staff are not totally sure who to contact with concerns. This was already being rectified when inspectors left the 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

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	3
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 settle very quickly into the Reception class because of the thought that goes into planning for their start at school. The class is split into two for the first week or so, for example, so that staff have more contact with individuals and get to know them better. Progress is good. Standards were below those expected for their age when children started last year, but by the time they left Reception they had caught up. The children who have just joined have done so with standards that are as expected for their age, and they were already learning well in the lessons observed. Standards of writing have been lower than other areas, so the manager rightly plans to start children writing earlier this year. Plans are also in place to work more closely with playgroups and other providers in order to gain a longer-term view of each child's progress and the provision made for them. Such clearly focussed actions on improving provision and achievement, based on a thorough understanding of the Early Years Foundation stage requirements, are evidence of good leadership and management. Assessments provide a good basis for planning lessons. Children help to plan the activities, so they are happy with what they are going to do. The guidance provided by the teacher through questioning is very effective. It makes the children think and time is given to allow them to respond. The guidance from other adults often provides too much help for children, at the expense of letting them think for themselves. A very wide range of well resourced activities is provided every lesson, with a good balance between those planned by the teacher and those chosen by the children themselves. Those for promoting physical development are particularly effective, and children's progress in this aspect is outstanding. However, the range is reduced considerably when it rains as there is no covered area outdoors, although the school has plans to provide one. Parents receive lots of information about how their child is getting on, and also how to help them learn at home, with simple resources provided by the 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

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Parents are very happy with all that the school provides and the standards their children achieve. Inspectors entirely agree with these views.

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 inspection team received 75 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 186 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	72	17	23	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	49	65	25	33	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	30	40	43	57	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	52	27	36	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	43	57	30	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	41	38	51	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	73	18	24	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	32	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	51	31	41	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	40	39	52	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	40	37	49	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	55	73	16	21	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	83	12	16	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



23 September 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary School, Credenhill, HR4 7DW

Many thanks for all the help you gave us when we recently visited your school. You told us how much you enjoy coming to school and we can see why. You go to a good school where you learn more quickly than we often see because you are taught well. You like your teachers and they know you well, so you feel safe at school. They also know what you are capable of, so when you are in your groups they give you difficult work that they know you can do if you really work hard.

You like tackling problems, so you concentrate well. Some of the lessons are a bit slow to start and you all do the same things, which some of you find a bit boring and others a bit confusing. So we have asked your teachers to spend less time on the introductions and to make sure that you are not all given the same work to do at the beginning of lessons. You can help too, by concentrating hard, even if you don't find the work as exciting as it often is. We were impressed by your behaviour and amazed at how healthy you are. Many of you did not start your education at this school, but all the staff help you settle in very quickly so that you are soon making the same good progress as others.

The people who run the school are good at checking how well you are doing and know what to do to make the school a better place for you. They spotted that boys were not doing as well as girls in the past, for instance, and changed how you were taught so boys now do as well as girls. We have suggested that they check other groups in the school to see if there are any differences, so that they can then draw up some plans to make the school better even more quickly. The people who run the school also know that you will do better if your parents and carers are happy with the school and know what is going on. So they work very hard at making sure that everyone involved with the school is happy with it. They have been very successful, especially in providing extra clubs that allow you to spend more time at school while your parents and carers are at work.

With all best wishes for your futures

Yours faithfully

David Driscoll

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.