



St Mary's Church of England Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115711
LEA Gloucestershire
Inspection number 279661
Inspection dates 24 May 2006 to 25 May 2006
Reporting inspector Chris Nye HMI

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Bouncers Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Prestbury
Age range of pupils	4 to 7		Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL52 5JB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01242 244054
Number on roll	178	Fax number	01242 244054
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Reverend Michael Cozens
Date of previous inspection	8 November 1999	Headteacher	Miss A Fitzpatrick

Age group 4 to 7	Inspection dates 24 May 2006 - 25 May 2006	Inspection number 279661
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school, which has a distinctive Christian ethos, serves an area of mixed social housing on the outskirts of Cheltenham. It is a popular school, although numbers have recently fallen slightly and it is smaller than average. Pupils are of mainly White British origin and very few are eligible for free school meals. There are currently no pupils attending the school who speak English as an additional language. There are fewer than average pupils with learning difficulties and with statements.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This school is outstandingly effective and gives excellent value for money because it provides a very high standard of education and care for its pupils. It has many strengths and very few weaknesses. It is rigorous in evaluating its own performance and judges itself to be good. Inspectors found that, because the school is so self-critical, it underestimates its effectiveness. When pupils enter the Foundation Stage they have levels of skills and knowledge in line with those expected for their age. Because the teaching is good they all make good progress and in Key Stage 1 this is further developed so that most leave the school at the end of Year 2 achieving well above national averages, particularly in reading and mathematics. Writing is above average, and the school is rightly focussing on improving this further. The quality of teaching throughout the school is often outstanding, particularly in the older classes, and is never less than good.

The school is exceptionally well led and managed at all levels and has robust and effective systems for monitoring pupils' progress. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and, as a result, they feel happy and safe and their personal development and well-being are very good.

All the issues raised in the last inspection have been appropriately resolved. However, the lack of access to broadband in classrooms restricts the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in supporting the curriculum.

Overall, the school's capacity to improve further is excellent because there is an uncompromising whole school commitment to raising standards, as demonstrated in the school's track record of improvement since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Resolve the lack of broadband access so that all areas of the curriculum can be better supported.
- Continue to focus on raising standards in writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils enter the Foundation Stage with average levels of attainment. They make good progress and most achieve or exceed the expected goals by the time they move into Year 1. They do particularly well in language, literacy and communication skills, as well as creative development and their understanding of the world. In Key Stage 1, pupils consistently attain very high standards, with most achieving well above average in reading and mathematics by the time they leave at the end of Year 2. Although writing standards do not reach the same level, they are around the national average, with pupils achieving well in relation to their starting points. The school is aware of the need for standards in writing to match those in reading and mathematics and is implementing effective strategies which are beginning to have a positive impact on standards of writing.

Pupils are set challenging targets based on accurate assessments of their individual needs and prior attainment in English, mathematics and science. Detailed assessment information is carefully analysed and efficient tracking systems all help to ensure that individuals and groups of children, including those with learning difficulties, make very good progress. All groups of pupils achieve equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils make exceptional progress in their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, because of the very positive atmosphere which permeates every aspect of life in the school. This is enhanced by an inspirational programme of collective worship which is well supported by the local church. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community by taking part in local festivals and in undertaking fund raising activities for numerous charities. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are outstanding. They treat each other with kindness and respect and instances of unacceptable behaviour are rare. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good. Pupils are valued, and this is well illustrated by the efforts undertaken to display pupils' work throughout the school to a very high standard. Because of this, pupils enjoy school and attendance is good.

Pupils express their views confidently and share in the responsibility of making the school a good place to learn. For example, a highly organised school council makes a valuable contribution to decisions regarding lunchtime activities. Pupils adopt healthy and safe lifestyles. A themed week on healthy attitudes is organised to highlight the importance of keeping healthy, and pupils benefit from daily milk and fruit, and growing their own vegetables. Pupils know the importance of keeping fit because the school provides a well organised physical education programme and activities such as 'Huff and Puff', as well as sports and dance clubs. Pupils are well prepared for their future lives because their personal development is effectively nurtured and they have high standards in their basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is usually outstanding, and never less than good. Lessons are lively, interesting and well planned. Teachers are enthusiastic and skilled. They successfully motivate the pupils, ensure that the pace of the lessons is brisk and that the work set matches pupils' individual needs. Very good teaching is consistent throughout the school, and much is inspirational, particularly in the classes for older pupils. Consequently, pupils are enthusiastic learners, behave well and do exceptionally well by the time they leave school.

The marking of pupils' work is detailed and accurate. It provides suitable praise and clear guidance about how it can improve and frequently refers to the pupils' progress

against their individual targets. Pupils work is very effectively assessed and this leads to the identification of suitably challenging targets and the planning of lessons that meet their learning needs. This means that the teaching is well focused on ensuring that standards are high and that pupils do well.

Teachers and teaching assistants provide highly effective support for individual pupils. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties are effectively identified and analysed at an early stage, and carefully planned intervention strategies and support are put in place to ensure that they make very good progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy. However, although pupils with particular gifts and talents are recognised, valued and supported, there is no formal method of systematically recording how their skills are being developed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

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Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school cares exceptionally well for its pupils. The strong emphasis of mutual support is well illustrated by the 'friendship stop' in the playground which successfully encourages pupils to involve others in their games who may be lonely at playtime. Supervision at break times is very good, a particular strength being the way in which adults engage with the pupils and clearly enjoy their company. As a result, the playground is a happy place and pupils play sensibly together.

Health and safety, child protection and risk assessment procedures are fully in place and are rigorously applied. All the adults are very well trained and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. They provide sensitive guidance to pupils, listen to their views and treat them with respect. Pupils therefore feel safe and well cared for within the family atmosphere of the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels. The headteacher, through her proactive leadership and high level of personal commitment to the school, expects and receives high standards from all members of staff. With the help of a very effective deputy headteacher and senior staff, she has created an atmosphere of mutual respect and support which is the key to the success of this school.

Curriculum co-ordinators and others with leadership and management responsibilities, such as the special educational needs co-ordinator, are well trained, effectively monitor their areas of responsibility and have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses. They have well thought out improvement plans and there is good cohesion between these and whole school improvement planning. This ensures that targets are clear, prioritised, appropriate and achievable. As a result, the strategic development of the school is robust and results in effective and continuous improvement.

There are very effective and well established procedures to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, track progress and analyse trends. When weaknesses are identified, effective support is put into place and this is closely monitored to ensure that the issues are resolved.

Teaching assistants are very well trained and managed. They are suitably deployed and provide very good support to individuals and groups of pupils.

The governors are very committed to the school and, through an efficiently focused system of monitoring, are kept very well informed about its work. They are very supportive and, together with the school, are well placed to build on the school's track record of improvement and make a positive contribution to further strategic development. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when Mr Kingwell and I visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and finding out about what you were learning. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and your parents and carers are very happy with what you are doing.

We think that yours is a brilliant school because the teachers provide exciting lessons which teach you what you need to learn. Because you are keen, behave well and work hard all of you do really well. In reading and mathematics you are doing particularly well and your writing is also getting better. Well done!

We liked hearing about all the fun things that you do in class, at break times and after school, but we, like the teachers, think that it is a shame that you do not have access to broadband in your classrooms yet.

We were really pleased to see how well you are all cared for and supported. Those of you who find school work hard get a lot of help and do well.

Miss Fitzpatrick and the adults work very hard to make yours a very happy and very successful school. Visiting it was, for us, a joy! Many thanks!