



St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116350
LEA Hampshire LEA
Inspection number 279797
Inspection dates 14 March 2006 to 15 March 2006
Reporting inspector Penny Holden AI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior	School address	Belle Vue Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Old Basing
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		Basingstoke RG24 7DE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01256465092
Number on roll	336	Fax number	01256358195
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Chris Beadle
Date of previous inspection	19 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Tracey Brunton

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. In the course of the day visit the inspector met with a selection of staff and governors and observed the school at work. Pupils were spoken to in lessons, at lunch and in the playground. Paired lesson observations were carried out with the headteacher. Pupils' work was examined. Supporting evidence and documentation was also presented by the school and used to form the inspection judgements. Thirty written comments and 137 questionnaires from parents were also received.

Description of the school

St Mary's is a voluntary aided junior school with 336 girls and boys on roll. The vast majority of pupils are from white British backgrounds. Pupils come from generally prosperous backgrounds. The school works with 20 pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities as well as four who have statements of special educational need.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'St Mary's is an excellent school which my children have really enjoyed attending and do not want to leave'. This comment, received from a parent during the inspection, is typical. The many extremely positive comments recognise the contribution made by the school to pupils' education. St Mary's Junior School is outstanding.

Pupils are keen to talk about school and to explain the part they play. The level of involvement every pupil feels is extraordinary. It is due to the many innovative ways their views and contributions are sought and valued. A parent wrote 'when the children see that their ideas are put into practice, it gives them a sense of involvement with the school, and fulfilment'. Lunchtime clubs are managed by pupils, as are developments such as the improvements to the playground. One boy explained how the outside area was now zoned at lunchtime: 'we are very organised you know.' The school's vision 'to trust and respect one another and recognise and rejoice in each other's talents' is very evident in daily life. There is attention to detail and something started is always intelligently completed. When the school's strategy to improve standards in mathematics proved too ambitious it was refocused. This made the work immensely successful: the teaching of mathematics is now very good and pupils' mathematical abilities greatly enhanced. The school intends to maintain the focus on the subject to consolidate the improvements and to apply some of the lessons learnt to other subjects.

Staff are eager to improve their skills and the headteacher is keen to encourage a 'climate of conjecture' where ideas are debated and people are open to learning. Non-teaching staff and teaching assistants are knowledgeable, valued members of staff with three working towards a higher level award.

The headteacher is in her second year at the school and has, as many parents commented, had a huge positive impact. 'The change in teaching and sharing with parents has been dramatic'. '.... it encourages an openness between school and parents.' '.... the school is much more inclusive and everyone's views are actively sort and listened to.' The governing body has also changed the way it operates, is more proactive and focused in its approach. The full involvement of parents, governors, staff and pupils in providing a rich and effective education for pupils is a particular characteristic of the school. This is one of the reasons why pupils with learning difficulties do so very well and significantly better than similar pupils nationally. Indeed, all pupils at the school achieve extremely well: this is due to consistently good teaching, interesting work, pupils' keenness to learn, parental support and thorough and continuous monitoring of individuals' progress. Standards are high and have risen significantly in mathematics to be well above average. One parent's comment indicates the broader success of the school 'I feel that St Mary's prepared my daughter, now in Year 7, well not only with her standard of education but also in encouraging her to be an independent learner.'

The leadership team have an excellent understanding of what works well and what could be improved in the school. They have very high aspirations not just wanting teaching to be consistently good but to make all teachers expert practitioners. Other

improvements identified include updating the computers and developing areas of the building and grounds. These have been properly planned and costed. These ambitions are driving the school's future development and explain why value for money is good. This highly successful school is destined to go on improving and developing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The pupils begin at the school with high standards and continue to make very good progress so that when they leave for secondary school they have achieved very well. Approximately half the pupils achieve at the highest levels, many more than expected nationally. Standards in English, mathematics and science had begun to dip slightly but changes made in the last few years have reversed this. Work to improve mathematics, which was the least successful of these three, has been very effective. Results were much better in 2005, above average, and are likely to improve further this year.

St Mary's performs significantly better than average when you look at the difference it makes from an individual's starting points to their final results. This is true of all groups of pupils. The school is particularly successful with pupils who have learning difficulties. The school's goals for the future are to continue to maximise individual's progress and to help even more pupils than now achieve the highest levels.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils really feel this is their school. The school council is much respected by pupils who feel it is an influential institution; 'if the school council thinks you have a good idea then they will that make it happen'. Pupils love taking responsibility; older pupils called 'red bibs' help others by acting as play leaders at lunchtimes. Some pupils are 'ambassadors' and have helped to appoint teachers. 'We really like the teacher we chose!' When developing the playground: pupils took major roles talking to other pupils, working with a designer, visiting other schools and feeding back to the governing body. They enjoyed working within a budget of andpound;10,000. Not surprisingly pupils love being at school. This is born out by the very high attendance rates.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

A range of lessons were jointly observed by the headteacher and the inspector. Strengths and areas for development were discussed and agreed. Judgements about the quality of teaching made by senior leaders are rigorous and pick out important aspects to improve. The strategies selected to foster improvement have been extremely successful, so much so that some techniques developed for mathematics are now being

used in other subjects to great effect. These include high quality questioning, pupils' active involvement in their learning and the use of resources including interactive whiteboards. Pupils stay on task and pay attention to learning throughout interesting activities. They love learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The variety of clubs at lunchtime and after school is celebrated by parents and pupils alike. Clubs range from frog watch to playground chess and art club. Large numbers of pupils take part as do a good number of staff and parents. The curriculum is very interesting because excellent links are made between subjects, for example, history is used as a very good vehicle for teaching the pupils to write. All subjects are seen as valuable and taught well. Many visitors come to the school, including authors and artists. Music plays an important part in school life with nearly a third learning musical instruments. There is a flourishing school choir and opportunities to celebrate the schools' Christian ethos are used well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school is very effective in providing care and support for all learners. Each child is known well by staff so that guidance and help can be given where needed. Where an action has not been effective alternative approaches are tried; staff won't give up on an individual. Several parents commented where their child with a learning difficulty had been transformed by the school's persistent and successful attention. There is a student council and a parent council to more formally capture their views and ideas. Both are much valued by the participants and the school. Many parents commented on the positive way the school listens and responds to their ideas and concerns. Parents recognise that 'there is a general feeling that they care and want the best for your child.' And 'St Mary's cares greatly about the pupils, their education and wellbeing.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Since the arrival of the headteacher 'The school is now more open and approachable and the school environment is less of a 'hot house' where pupils are freer to be more themselves without standards being compromised.' This testimony from a parent reflects the views of the school community about improvement under the current leadership. The headteacher's desire to involve everyone with a stake in the school in its development is having a remarkable impact. Some major changes have included the way the governing body works. They have more strategic meetings, prepare for the meetings thoroughly, have timed agendas and each governor has a role. The most recent governing body meeting looked at 'what we want our school to look like in 2010'. The governing body have co-opted a governor to lead a review of the school's Christian ethos and identify where it could be developed. The school knows itself

extremely well, and has very high standards for what it wants the pupils to experience and achieve.

Staff with leadership roles are fully involved. They monitor and develop colleagues' skills, help with planning and check that pupils are reaching high enough standards. A good example is the mathematics leader who has played a vital role in developing the curriculum, improving teaching and standards in the subject. Some exciting plans to develop team teaching have emerged from this work and will be trialled this term. The school provides excellent professional development opportunities for all staff and the take up is very good. This benefits pupils who have inspired adults teaching enthusiastically in a climate that supports innovation and learning.

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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	NA	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	2	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	2	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	2	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

Pupils

I will not forget my visit to your school because so many of you wanted to speak to me about the things you liked and did at St Mary's. Thank you, to all who talked to me, or who I saw in class, or around the school.

I agree with you that you have a wonderful school. You work hard in class and make very good progress in your work. You are very good at working ideas out with a partner and answering questions in class. You are all keen to do even better in your work by achieving your targets. So many of you are involved in helping the school run well, from ambassadors, to prefects, to red bibs. You are really enthusiastic about all the interesting things that go on in class, at lunchtime and after school. I hope the final of the pop contest is exciting as I know how much you are looking forward to it. Many of Year 6 told me about their residential trip and how much they enjoyed it, I expect those of you in the younger classes cannot wait for your turn.

Your parents, your teachers and the other adults in the school all play an important part in giving you an interesting education. The headteacher makes sure that everyone involved in the school is listened to and that their ideas are valued and often acted upon. The governors work with the staff on these ideas to plan interesting improvements to the school and to the work you do. I know you have enjoyed the changes made to the playground and you love the new climbing and play equipment. The school is buying new computers for you to use and plans to develop the courtyard to give you a garden of reflection. I am sure you will continue to love your time at St Mary's as everyone is working to make it even better.

Best wishes,

Penny Holden

Lead Inspector