



# Welwyn St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117490  
**LEA** HERTFORDSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 280097  
**Inspection dates** 19 October 2005 to 20 October 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. David Jones LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	15 London Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		AL6 9DJ
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01438714169
<b>Number on roll</b>	394	<b>Fax number</b>	01438716472
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr. Michael Clarke
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Alison Witchell

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 19 October 2005 - 20 October 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 280097
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Welwyn St Mary's is a voluntary aided Church of England primary school in the village of Welwyn, Hertfordshire. The school is larger than most primaries. Most pupils live locally and represent a range of social backgrounds. The majority of pupils have attended the neighbouring nursery school and join St Mary's with skills that are above average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. Pupils are mostly of white British heritage, although there are some from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is average. The school achieved the Activemark and National Healthy School awards in 2004. Similarly, in the same year, the school demonstrated its commitment to the Arts and was awarded Artsmark Gold.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

Welwyn St Mary's believes itself to be a good school; inspectors agree. It provides a good standard of education, pupils make good progress and the school gives good value for money. The personal development of the pupils is outstanding; their behaviour is very good and relationships between pupils and with the adults in the school are very good. Pupils are happy to come to school; they feel secure and well cared for and display very good attitudes to learning. The enjoyment they derive from lessons that challenge and engage them is outstanding. Attendance is above the national average. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Key Stage 2; in some lessons time is not always used effectively. Assessment is used to set individual targets, but few pupils can explain what they need to do to improve their work. The quality of education in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection. Curriculum provision and standards of attainment have improved. Computers are old, and the school is rightly planning to replace these. The leadership and management of the school are good. Self-evaluation systems are good. All staff have been involved in the producing the new school improvement plan. The headteacher has developed the education facilities available effectively. The partnerships with parents, agencies and others to promote learners' well-being are good. The school has demonstrated that it has the capacity to improve further.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- refine the assessment for learning programme to help raise achievement - enhance the provision in the Foundation Stage by improving resources and the professional development of support staff - improve the monitoring of support for all pupils with learning difficulties to make sure this provision supports all pupils as effectively as possible - seek to improve the school's outdated computer suite.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards across the school have varied slightly on an annual basis but continue to improve. Seven-year-olds do well in reading and writing, achieving above national expectations. However, higher achieving pupils underperformed in mathematics. Older pupils have reached standards above national expectations in English, mathematics and science for the last three years. Pupil progress improved in 2004 and was satisfactory. The unvalidated results of the 2005 national tests indicate that standards of attainment in the core subjects have continued to improve and are significantly above the national average. These results are likely to show that the pupils made good progress. Girls and boys do equally well in the national tests. The school sets appropriate targets and regularly exceeds them. In lessons, progress in all key stages was satisfactory. A scrutiny of the pupils' books shows that middle ability pupils often make good progress. Higher achieving pupils make more consistent progress in mathematics and science than in English. Most children join the reception class with

skills that exceed expectations for their age and make satisfactory progress throughout the year. Inspectors agree with the school that attainment on entry is above average.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The pupils' personal development is outstanding; this reflects the school's judgement. The pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, and attendance is good. In lessons and around the school, pupils' behaviour is very good. They work and play together well, showing respect for other pupils' opinions and efforts. The pupils' contribution to the school community is outstanding. Older pupils act as monitors and enjoy their responsibilities; they take these seriously and show initiative. The school council provides good experience as pupils work together for the benefit of the school community. The school has a significant history of generous contributions to charitable causes. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils understand how to keep safe and healthy; for example, they learn road safety and the importance of following a healthy diet. Pupils develop very good literacy and numeracy skills which prepares them well for adult life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall; the school judged teaching to be very good. All staff were observed teaching; nearly half the lessons were good or better. Teaching was stronger in Key Stage 2 and outstanding teaching was seen in Years 5 and 6. In the best lessons, good use was made of open-ended questions which extended pupils' oral skills. The pace and challenge of the lesson engaged the pupils' attention and enabled them to make good progress. Teachers capitalised on the pupils' good oral responses to extend the learning opportunities. Imaginative instruction provided guidance on how to produce the higher level response. Strategies for managing the class were good. The teachers' subject knowledge was often good; lesson objectives were made clear at the outset and revisited at the end to gauge success. In lessons that were satisfactory overall there were a number of areas for development. Some tasks lacked imagination and challenge and in some classes ineffective time management curtailed potentially challenging conclusions to the lessons. Most teaching assistants made valuable contributions to the lessons; they were well briefed and had clear roles when working with either groups or individuals. The pupils' very positive attitudes to learning were a significant feature in every lesson. The school has had effective systems for tracking assessment data for many years. Teachers use this information to set individual targets, but few pupils can explain what they have to do to improve. Teachers' marking is satisfactory but does not always tell pupils what they have done well and how to make progress. The school uses assessment to focus on standards of attainment rather than on seeking to improve achievement.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school gives its pupils an interesting curriculum which is enriched by a very good choice of clubs and extra-curricular activities. Music has a high profile that is much appreciated by pupils who enjoy the abundant opportunities to sing and play instruments. The choirs have an excellent reputation that is well deserved. Displays around the school reflect the high standards pupils reach in art as a result of the school's commitment to this subject. There is plenty of practical work in science, contributing to high standards. Lessons are often developed in the environmental garden which offers an outstanding resource. On occasions the old computers malfunction and so interrupt teaching and learning. There is a suitable programme of personal, social, health and citizenship lessons which encourages pupils to stay safe and healthy. The school is currently working to ensure more planned links between subjects to increase pupils' enjoyment further. The school has sensibly sought guidance on how to improve the experience for children in the reception class, where the curriculum is satisfactory. They are rightly planning to improve resources and to provide more activities outside.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school takes good care of its pupils. It is very evident that pupils care for each other. Older pupils take the roles of 'buddies' and 'yellow banders' so there is always a friend to turn to. Child protection procedures are very good and known well by all staff. Pupils with a statement of special educational need are very well supported by highly proficient teaching assistants and make good progress. However, the support for other pupils with learning difficulties is not monitored in a consistent manner. Currently, there are not enough checks to make sure this provision supports pupils as effectively as that provided for pupils with statements of special educational need.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the school is successfully focused on raising standards and promoting the personal development and well-being of learners. It has created a common sense of purpose among staff. Standards of attainment have been above national expectations since the last inspection. However, levels of achievement have varied significantly, although they show notable recent improvement. Pupils have a sense of security and enjoy their education. Self-evaluation procedures are generally good although some judgements are more generous than those awarded by inspectors. Many of the areas noted in this report as important to the school's further improvement form part of the school development plan. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are conducted on a regular basis; analysis is sound and feedback clearly expressed. However, all observations need to include judgements and utilise the new national criteria. The school has a good reputation

locally which is well deserved. The leadership and management provide the school with a good capacity to improve. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Resources are well used; effective contacts with external services make a positive contribution to provision and to secure good value for money. The role of the subject co-ordinators is satisfactory and they have made positive contributions to the good school development plan. Co-ordinators and senior managers need to use the school's assessment data and the initiatives included in the school development plan to secure higher levels of achievement. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is managed appropriately. However, the parents of some pupils with learning difficulties pay for the additional support their children receive as part of their normal curriculum. There is no provision within current legislation that allows the school to accept such funds. The school has conducted regular parental questionnaires; those returned as part of this inspection were generally positive about the quality of education provided. The governance of the school is good; the governing body and the diocesan authorities are well informed, supportive and consistently act as a critical friend.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	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	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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 contributing to the inspection. It was good to meet you during my recent visit. I was very impressed by your behaviour, how happy you are in school and your very good attitude to learning. The way that older pupils take responsibility for supporting others was lovely to see. I was particularly impressed by the way you enjoy lessons that challenge you. The art work around the school looked very good and the sound of the choir echoing down the corridor at lunchtime was a special treat. I was pleased to receive the letters and telephone calls from your parents; I have tried to answer their questions in the report, so please give them my thanks. As I have just said, I believe there are many good things about your school to be celebrated but there are also ways in which it can improve. I have asked the headteacher and the governors to focus their efforts on raising achievement. This means that because of your positive attitude to learning you can be more successful if all of your lessons are equally challenging. I know that your parents are looking forward to improving the outside learning area and the resources in the reception class; the school plans for this are nearly complete. I think the support that is provided for those of you who find learning hard could be checked more carefully. You and your teachers get frustrated with the old computers when they break down and I know the school is going to replace them soon. As pupils you can help too. It is very important that you know what you have to do to improve your work, so ask regularly and check your own work to see if you have been successful. I hope I meet some of you again one day.