



St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 103410
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286650
Inspection date 13 September 2006
Reporting inspector Ian Hodgkinson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Lodge Hill Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Selly Oak
Age range of pupils	4-11		Birmingham B29 6NU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 6751729
Number on roll (school)	209	Fax number	0121 4155065
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Seinde Balogun
		Headteacher	Alisa Hathaway
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2001		

Age group 4-11	Inspection date 13 September 2006	Inspection number 286650
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to administration error

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves a socially very diverse community in the south of Birmingham. Most pupils come from the affluent ward in which the school is located but around a fifth come from nearby areas where social deprivation is high. Over a quarter of children speak English as an additional language and seven pupils are at an early stage of learning the language. Strong links with the church underpin the school's ethos and attendance at church is one of the criteria for admission, but pupils and staff of other faiths are represented.

The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average, but an average proportion has statements of special educational need. The school has made a number of recent adaptations to its buildings to accommodate the needs of an increasing number of children with severe medical conditions or physical disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Mary's is a good school which is highly successful in meeting its aim of 'bringing out the best in each other'. A powerful ethos of mutual support runs through the school. When asked what the best thing was about having an older pupil as a 'partner' through the school's innovative and award-winning Partners project, a pupil replied, 'They really look out for you.' Teachers look out for their pupils, too, because their comprehensive systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress and personal development allow them to intervene quickly to offer support where necessary. This ensures that everyone has the opportunity to flourish. The school has developed an excellent network of support, with partners and agencies in the local community to draw on specialist expertise or resources to support provision for individuals or groups of pupils.

The caring, supportive ethos of the school promotes excellent personal development among the pupils. The very high standard of behaviour shown by most pupils ensures that learning is purposeful in lessons and that pupils feel safe in school. A very active and effective school council is one way in which pupils make highly effective contributions to school life by taking on responsibilities and sharing their ideas and concerns openly. The school's healthy eating drive has been very well supported by parents and has been effective in promoting healthier lifestyles.

High levels of attendance are testament to the extent to which pupils enjoy their learning. Good teaching, with lively, well-planned lessons and a curriculum enriched with a very strong programme of activities and visits help to secure that enjoyment. Pupils achieve well in the school. In the reception year, the staff offer good structure to children's learning through a range of stimulating activities and contexts to help secure good progress. Pupils finish school in Year 6 with standards which are significantly above average, and in 2005 standards were exceptionally high. However, from the last inspection through to 2005, standards in tests at the end of Year 2 showed a steady decline from above average to broadly average. The decline was especially marked at the higher levels of attainment in reading and writing. Year 2 results in 2006 are much improved as a result of a strong focus by teachers on improving the targets they set for children, which has helped to raise expectations among pupils and teachers. Pupils' progress in writing, however, still does not match the strong progress made in other subjects.

Good leadership has sustained the school's strong ethos and good achievement since the last inspection. The headteacher has promoted the effective building of teams of staff to monitor and improve the school's performance, and, through these teams, issues such as the decline in standards in Years 1 and 2 have been tackled. The enthusiasm and commitment of the staff is frequently noted by parents and visitors as a key strength of the school. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and well-informed, but does not yet sharply enough identify the most important areas for development. As a consequence, the school's improvement plan does not prioritise the areas of greatest importance on which the school should focus. Nonetheless, recent

significant improvements in Year 2 test results are a good indicator of the school's good capacity to carry forward improvements in key areas.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the standard of style, organisation and presentation of pupils' writing.
- Identify the most important areas for improvement more sharply through self-evaluation, and prioritise these matters in school improvement planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well during their time in school. Children join the reception class from a large number of different nursery settings. Their attainment on entry to the school varies very widely but taken overall is broadly average. They make good progress through the reception class. By the end of reception, standards overall are a little above those expected nationally. Standards in language and literacy are in line with those expected nationally, but they are better than expected in mathematics.

By the time pupils leave in Year 6, standards are well above average. Pupils make good progress overall. Standards in tests at the end of Year 2 showed a substantial improvement in all areas in 2006 after a period of steady decline. Across the school, pupils' progress in writing is satisfactory, but it is not as strong as progress in other subjects. Pupils respond well to targets set for improving the precision of grammar and punctuation. However, their presentation and organisation of written work and the selection of a style that matches the audience are relative weaknesses. Standards in science have risen strongly in the last two years as a result of improvements to the science curriculum and support given to teachers.

The school's systems for tracking the progress of individual pupils and intervening with support of high quality ensure that all groups make good progress. Pupils who join the school as beginners in speaking English make swift progress in acquiring the language.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. One parent wrote that, 'the sense of responsibility children have towards one another is amazing'. Children demonstrate this sense of social responsibility in many ways, such as in their collaborative work in lessons and their respectful behaviour in the playground. The maturity of the work they do as school councillors, peer mediators and partners to younger pupils or disabled pupils from a local special school is outstanding. It helps to prepare them well for later life. Children show a high level of awareness of the importance of tolerance and respect in a racially and culturally diverse society. They are also highly aware of the need for healthy lifestyles, and participate well in the school's drive for healthy eating. Their enthusiasm and excellent behaviour help to

ensure that they make the most of opportunities presented for sport and exercise, although facilities for competitive sport are limited.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good, and pupils learn well. 'Teachers inspire and encourage the children,' wrote one parent. Lessons are indeed consistently lively and engaging, and contribute much to pupils' great enjoyment of their education. Teachers and teaching assistants assess pupils regularly and the results of these assessments are used effectively to target support for individuals and groups of pupils. Occasionally, however, teachers do not clearly link their lesson plans and class teaching to the outcomes they expect for their pupils, and so pupils' learning slows as it lacks focus.

The setting of clear and precise targets for individual pupils' progress in literacy has been an important means of raising expectations of pupils and staff about standards pupils should achieve. Teachers mark work very constructively against these targets so that pupils and their parents are very clear about how the pupils are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum offers good breadth and balance across the school. Through the curriculum, pupils are able to develop good basic skills to equip themselves for later life. Provision for pupils to learn using computers has improved well since the last inspection. In information and communication technology, as in science and physical education, the school has been able to draw very effectively on links with partner schools, colleges and other organisations to raise standards. Time available for physical education is, however, still somewhat below the recommended two hours per week. The curriculum is enhanced by a very good range of trips and visits, including to local businesses to develop pupils' enterprise skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's outstanding care for its pupils permeates its work in all respects and is reflected, in the words of one parent, 'In its ability to treat children as individuals within the school community.' The school's response to the individual needs of pupils is rapid. Staff and governors are prepared to devote much time and resources to ensuring that provision for all is of a good quality. The school's systems for assessing and tracking the progress of pupils are rigorous and thorough. They allow early intervention to support individuals, and have been used increasingly to good effect to help raise overall standards and particularly standards in writing in Years 1 and 2, although these had been weaknesses.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management, including effective governance, have enabled the school to sustain and build upon its strong ethos while tackling some emerging weaknesses in standards. In addition to her own thorough monitoring, the headteacher has successfully created teams of teachers to work together to monitor and develop standards in subjects. Teachers and teaching assistants have been successfully supported and encouraged to look outside the school for curricular links and for professional development to help to challenge complacency and bring in new ideas. The school knows itself well through its own self-evaluation, but it does not clearly prioritise the main areas for improvement, such as the need to improve writing, in its development plan. As a consequence, links are not always made between the improvement plans in subjects and the principle school priorities.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for the welcome you gave to me when I visited the school for its inspection. I enjoyed meeting you and looking at your work.

I think you go to a good school. You clearly enjoy your lessons and activities very much. This is because of good teaching. The teachers and other adults make lessons enjoyable and let you know very clearly how you can make your work better. You make good progress in your work through the school.

The thing that really stands out about your school, though, is how caring it is. The school takes a great deal of care for you, and supports everyone to help them enjoy their work and achieve well. In turn, you show a great deal of care for each other. You 'look out for' each other, as one pupil said. You work really sensibly and well together in lessons and activities. You carry out any responsibilities, such as being on the school council, very well. Many people comment on how the excellent behaviour shown by most pupils helps to make sure that pupils learn really well in lessons.

The school is well led by the governors and headteacher, who are always looking for ways to make things better. I think there are two main ways in which the school can improve. Firstly, I think pupils can do a bit better in their writing, where generally they don't do quite as well as in other subjects. You can help in this by making sure that you take care in the presentation of your work and by thinking carefully about how you want your writing to affect the reader. Secondly, I have asked the school's leaders to pick out the most important things that the school can do to improve to help everyone concentrate more on those.

I wish you every success for the future.