



St Mary's CofE (VC) Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103837
Local Authority Dudley
Inspection number 286781
Inspection dates 17–18 October 2006
Reporting inspector David Cox

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

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| Type of school | Primary | School address | Queen Street |
| School category | Voluntary controlled | | Kingswinford |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 | | DY6 7AQ |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01384 818295 |
| Number on roll (school) | 212 | Fax number | 01384 818297 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | John Lungley |
| | | Headteacher | Brian Jones |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 October 2001 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's Church of England Primary School is an average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties is broadly average. When children arrive in Reception, many do not have the skills and knowledge expected for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education. The school considers itself to be more effective because it has introduced many initiatives in recent years to improve standards. However, these are not completely embedded throughout the school and so pupils do not make consistently good progress. Pupils achieve satisfactorily and reach average standards because the teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. Parents and pupils are happy with the school. They comment on the very caring nature of the school and how approachable the headteacher and his staff are. Good care, guidance and support underpin pupils' good personal development and well-being. Children make a good start in Reception because of consistently good teaching that enables them to progress well in all aspects of their learning. Children make particularly good progress with their personal and social development because teachers know the needs of the children very well. Attainment on entry to Year 1 is broadly average. By the time pupils leave Year 6, standards are average. Standards in 2005 were average in English and science, and slightly above average in mathematics. More recent results indicate that standards are average in all three subjects. By the end of Year 6, standards in writing are not high enough. This is because teachers do not always make consistent use of strategies to improve pupils' writing skills. The information gathered on pupils' previous performance is not used effectively to plan activities that challenge more-able pupils or to set them demanding enough targets for improvement. Pupils feel safe and thoroughly enjoy their time at school. Attendance levels are above average. Pupils behave well because adults actively promote the school's caring ethos and encourage pupils to be courteous and polite. Occasionally, a few pupils are inattentive, which hinders their progress. Pupils are proud of their school and help younger pupils to settle into school routines. They appreciate the considerable improvements made to the school environment. Pupils are encouraged to express their opinions through the school and class councils. They say there is very little they would change about the school, apart from continuing to improve the already very good outdoor facilities. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles because of the effective programmes of regular exercise and a good range of out-of-school sporting activities. Their concern for others is demonstrated by the many fundraising events they organise and their positive contribution to the local and wider community. Pupils develop satisfactory basic skills which prepare them well for later life. Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory. However, there are weaknesses in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, which do not sufficiently highlight the weaknesses to help bring about improvement. The headteacher is particularly successful in promoting pupils' personal development. Leaders have recognised that standards need to be improved and have put in place a series of training events to support staff. These are beginning to have the desired effect, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Leaders have shown that they can move the school forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of writing by ensuring that teachers make full and effective use of the recently introduced strategies for improvement.

- Raise standards by ensuring that teachers make more effective use of assessment data to set more challenging work, particularly for more-able pupils.
- Take a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average and reflect pupils' satisfactory progress. During their time in Reception, children make good progress. Nearly all achieve what is expected nationally by the end of Reception and a significant minority exceed expectations. Very good planning and lots of exciting and diverse activities ensure that children's needs are met well, and they make good progress in all areas of learning. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6, so that by the end of Year 6, standards are average overall. The most recent set of results indicate that standards are broadly average in all three subjects and this is reflected in pupils' standards in their current work. The school has correctly identified that standards of writing need to be improved. Improved teaching, as a result of recent training, has helped to improve writing standards, particularly by the end of Year 2. However, standards reached by the end of Year 6 are still not high enough. Most pupils meet their targets, except where they lack sufficient challenge, particularly for those in Years 3 to 6 who are more able.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development of pupils is good. Behaviour is good and pupils say that they 'enjoy school life.' Most have positive attitudes, except when their work lacks challenge and interest, especially in Years 3 to 6. They are polite and happy and like coming to school. Pupils are keen to arrive on time. Pupils know who to turn to if they need help. They enjoy taking regular exercise. Both the school council and class councils have worked hard to promote 'Healthy Tuck' and 'Healthy Lunchboxes' throughout school. Pupils make a good contribution to their community and local church and are keen to support local and national fundraising activities, such as the 'Tsunami Appeal.' Older pupils have a good sense of responsibility and enjoy acting as play buddies to the younger children. Pupils have helped to improve the outdoor environment, for example, by creating a 'Seaside Garden,' which is popular with children in Reception. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils show an informed awareness of their own cultural traditions and a good understanding of life in other countries, such as Peru. They quickly learn right from wrong and so their relationships with each other are good. A strong ethos of caring for others underpins pupils' work. Links with industry and fundraising initiatives help pupils acquire sound skills to support their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

In Reception, teachers and support staff work closely together to provide interesting activities that help children's personal development and enable them to develop good skills of independence. Pupils are keen listeners, are lively and thoroughly enjoy their time both in and out of the classroom. Throughout the school, pupils' behaviour is managed skilfully by staff, and this ensures they gain in confidence and develop good personal skills. Teaching does not always challenge pupils sufficiently, particularly the more able, and occasionally, some of the older boys do not find the tasks enjoyable. As a consequence, there are lapses in concentration and a tendency to leave gaps in their work. A strong feature is the way teachers are enabling pupils to consider how they learn and not just what they learn. Pupils with learning difficulties, particularly behaviour difficulties, make satisfactory progress because there is an effective contribution from teaching assistants, who manage these pupils well. Assessment data is not always used effectively to meet the needs of these pupils. Strategies to improve pupils' writing are not used consistently and this results in pupils' uneven progress throughout Years 3 to 6.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. However, it does not always meet the learning needs of pupils in writing, especially the older pupils. In Reception, the curriculum is good and is matched very well to children's age and experience. The provision for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory, while pupils make good use of their information and communication technology (ICT) skills to support their learning. The good provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education helps pupils to stay safe and healthy. Across the school, there is an exciting thematic approach which actively promotes the pupils' independent learning skills. There is a good range of enrichment activities, including educational visits, visitors, clubs and musical and sporting activities which promote pupils' personal development. These experiences enhance pupils' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Guidance for pupils' personal development is good and staff know pupils well. Links with the local church and other schools are good and help to support pupils' learning. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported well and there are good links with outside agencies. Parents are appreciative of the work of the school and think their children get a good start to their education. One parent commented, 'the staff have a good rapport with the children and always seem to be smiling, even on a wet Friday afternoon.' Procedures to ensure health and safety and child protection are good.

Occasionally, teachers do not carry out a full risk assessment of the classroom activities in which pupils are engaged. Arrangements to support pupils' academic progress are satisfactory and improving. Pupils are given valuable guidance as to how to make their work better but targets are not always challenging enough, especially for the most able pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is committed to raising standards and widening opportunities both for individual pupils and the community in general. The strong caring ethos is particularly successful in promoting pupils' good personal development. It ensures that most pupils are treated equally well. There are good partnerships with parents and outside agencies to support the school's work. Parents and pupils are happy with the quality of the school's provision. The headteacher gives clear direction. With good support from the deputy headteacher, he has recognised the weaknesses that have led to a slight fall in standards in recent years. The school has built on the good support from the local authority and pupils' standards of writing are beginning to improve. Leaders have introduced successful schemes that are helping pupils to understand how they learn. Plans for improvement are satisfactory and leaders have shown that they can move the school forward. School self-evaluation is generally accurate. There are satisfactory systems to check how well it is doing but its evaluation of teaching and learning lacks sufficient rigour and so the impact on improving teaching is limited. Governors challenge the headteacher when necessary, give the school satisfactory support and make sure statutory requirements are met. The school has a considerable budget surplus which is being used effectively to reduce the impact of falling rolls. This school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further and provides satisfactory value for money.

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Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |

The quality of provision

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

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

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 |
| 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

As you know, we visited your school recently to find out how well St Mary's is doing. We would like to thank you for looking after us so well. We enjoyed talking to so many of you during play time and lunch time about your school, the work you have done and how much you enjoy coming to school. We think that the school is providing you with a satisfactory education. What we found During your first year at school in Reception, you make good progress because your teachers know you well and provide you with lots of exciting things to do. Those of you in Years 1 to 6 make satisfactory progress because your teachers help you to work hard. You like coming to school and say what a wonderful place it is. You enjoy all the extra sports and visits that you take part in. The adults in your school look after you well. Your parents also value the good care that you receive. Most of you bring healthy food in your lunch boxes and the school also gives you lots of healthy food at lunchtimes. We have asked the school to make sure that lessons are as good as they can be and that you improve your writing. The teachers need to keep a closer eye on how well you are doing so that you can be given more challenging work.