

St Mary Redcliffe Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109147
Local Authority	Bristol, City of
Inspection number	288295
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Chris Nye HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	360
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Moss
Headteacher	Nigel Isaac
Date of previous school inspection	21 October 2002
School address	Windmill Close Windmill Hill Bristol BS3 4DP
Telephone number	0117 9664875
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Age group	3–11
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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

St Mary Redcliffe is a larger-than-average primary school with nursery provision. It serves an area of central Bristol where levels of social and economic deprivation are above average. The school population is ethnically diverse: almost half come from Black or minority ethnic groups and for almost half of these pupils, English is not their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average.

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 Redcliffe is a good and improving school. The school evaluated itself as satisfactory, but inspectors feel that this underestimates the impact that its many strengths are having on improving the quality of the provision overall.

The school is particularly successful at working in partnership with a range of services and the community to create a school which values the cultural and ethnic diversity of its pupils. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and greatly value the inclusive atmosphere that it has created. One parent commented: 'One of the great strengths of this school is its ability to help children from so many different backgrounds bond together into a close community, celebrating rather than overlooking their differences'.

In the Foundation Stage, standards are below expectations but the quality of the provision overall is good. Teaching is good and children make good progress, but systems to assess their starting points when they first arrive at the school are not robust enough.

Standards are below average throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 because many pupils start at very low levels, particularly in English, mathematics and science. However, the teaching and support are good, particularly for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the relatively high number of pupils for whom English is not their first language. As a result, pupils make good progress throughout the school and the proportion who are working at expected levels is steadily improving.

The school provides good support, care and verbal guidance for its pupils, but the written feedback to pupils on what they need to improve is inconsistent. Accurate and effective systems are in place to assess and track pupils' progress and these are having a positive impact on curricular planning because teachers are using assessment information to match their teaching to pupils' needs.

The leadership provided by the headteacher, senior staff and governors is excellent and the developing strengths in curricular leadership are beginning to impact positively on the quality of the provision. The school has a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, has robust plans in place to ensure steady and sustained improvement and has made very good progress in addressing the issues raised at the last inspection. Consequently, its capacity to improve further is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that systems to assess children at the start of their time in the Reception classes are more robust.
- Ensure greater consistency in the written guidance given to pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are below national averages throughout the school but, because pupils make good progress from well-below-expected levels when they start school, overall achievement is good. In the Foundation Stage, ongoing assessment indicates that children make good progress from generally very low starting points, particularly in mathematical and personal, social and emotional development. However, although most children are working at expected levels when they

transfer to Key Stage 1, few exceed the standards expected for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy.

In Key Stage 1, standards are improving over time and, although by the end of the key stage they remain below national averages, progress is good in relation to pupils' starting points. Reading and writing show the greatest improvement because of the strong focus that the school has placed on these areas, but very few pupils achieve higher levels of attainment.

Standards in Year 6 are below national expectations in English, mathematics and science, but progress is good, particularly in mathematics, and pupils are on track to meet or exceed their challenging targets. In the younger Key Stage 2 classes, achievement is rapidly improving, with an increasing number of pupils each year working at levels expected for their age.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language make good, and sometimes very good, progress. This is because the school provides well-targeted specialist support, particularly in English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are confident and friendly. Behaviour is outstanding in lessons, and mainly good in the playground, although when moving around the school, a minority are less well behaved. Relationships between adults and children are excellent and pupils say that they really enjoy coming to school. One parent commented that the school 'has a great, lively, friendly atmosphere'.

Pupils' social, moral and cultural development is good because the school places a suitably strong emphasis on valuing, celebrating and respecting the wide range of cultural diversity which is reflected in the school's population. For example, a programme of regular visitors from representatives of different faiths and events like the Black History Week are helping to broaden pupils' understanding of other cultures and religions. However, assemblies, whilst never less than satisfactory, do not always make the best use of opportunities to generate a sense of spiritual awe and wonder.

Pupils have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and how to keep safe, and this is well supported by the curriculum and other activities. The 'Cycle to School' initiative, for example, has been well supported by pupils. Pupils also benefit from being given a wide range of responsibilities such as membership of the school council, librarians and play leaders. They take these responsibilities seriously and are themselves contributing to the well-being of others; for example, the librarians provide poetry and story-reading sessions for younger pupils. Standards in basic skills in literacy and numeracy are below average, but the school provides good opportunities to develop these and other skills such as team working and in information and communication technology, so it is providing satisfactory preparation for pupils' future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school and sometimes outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make good use of interactive whiteboards to explain new

ideas to pupils. They have high expectations and are extremely effective in managing pupils' behaviour through setting clear boundaries and appropriately praising good behaviour. As a result, pupils are keen to learn and make progress in their lessons; several pupils commented that in the best lessons, 'teachers make learning fun'. A strong feature is the effective use of success criteria which are shared with pupils and revisited several times during lessons; this supports pupils' learning very well because they are able to see for themselves the progress that they make in each lesson. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of pupils with different abilities.

Marking is positive and some teachers provide detailed written comments on how pupils can improve their work, although this is inconsistent. Older pupils are confident that they know the next steps to achieve higher levels of work, but this is not the case for all pupils. In the Foundation Stage, teachers are effectively using every opportunity to develop children's personal and social skills and this is beginning to have a positive impact on raising attainment. However, the system for assessing pupils when they start in the Reception classes is not sufficiently robust to accurately identify their starting points in all the areas of learning, and this initially holds back their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned and takes good account of the needs of mixed-age classes in Key Stage 2, for example, by ensuring that a cross-curricular themed approach in some subjects has a two-year cycle. Staff have clearly identified the skills that need to be taught and are rightly working hard to develop an even better skills-based curriculum. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good and classrooms provide a stimulating learning environment. The Foundation Stage outside area is appropriately used, particularly by the Nursery class, although access is not easy for the Reception classes, which restricts the choices that children can make about whether to be inside or outside.

The curriculum is enriched well by a range of clubs, visits, visitors and special events. Pupils greatly benefit from taking part in themed events such as the 'Fair Trade Fortnight' and the 'Forest School' initiatives, which are strongly supported by members of the wider community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care and support is good and parents say that their children feel safe and well looked after. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are good and all statutory requirements are fully in place. Teachers and support staff know the pupils very well and the learning mentor and teaching assistants support pupils with behavioural or learning difficulties and/or disabilities very well. Pupils who do not speak English as their first language are particularly well supported, for example, through employing Somali- and Polish-speaking teaching assistants and through such activities as a well-attended language club to help newly arrived Eastern European pupils settle into the area.

Although attendance is below the national average, this has improved considerably as a result of careful monitoring, proactive procedures to investigate absence and reward good attendance, and good liaison with the education welfare service.

The school is using assessment data well to track pupils' progress and ensure that additional support is given where it is needed. Pupils who are gifted or talented are identified and provided

with suitably challenging and supportive activities. Pupils are well guided and supported through verbal feedback from teachers, although marking does not always provide them with sufficiently clear guidance on the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good, with some outstanding features. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. His calm but proactive approach has been very successful in raising both staff morale and the quality of the provision from a comparatively low base following a period of considerable upheaval. As a result, standards are beginning to improve and, overall, pupils are making good progress. The senior management team works well together to set a clear direction for the school and effective systems are in place to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Curricular leaders are developing increasing confidence in their roles. Leadership in English, mathematics and science is well developed because leaders make good use of the results of systematic monitoring and assessment information to identify suitable priorities for improvement. As a result, there is evidence that standards are improving. The school is aware that leadership is less well developed in some other subjects, and a well-conceived programme of training to address this is beginning to have a positive impact. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage is an emerging strength, although some aspects, such as assessment, are underdeveloped.

The governors provide excellent support and appropriate challenge to the school. They are well organised and, because they know the school well, have a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and make a positive contribution to the strategic development of the school. The school improvement plan is well focused on development priorities and provides clear guidance for the future. Resources are well managed and classrooms are suitably equipped, providing an attractive learning environment for the pupils. The recently refurbished library is well managed and frequently used by pupils. However, in spite of some improvements to parts of the building, such as the entrance area, the building and site are inadequate for the needs of a modern primary education. Nevertheless, the school works hard to make the best use of a challenging site and, because pupils are making good progress, provides good value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2
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	1
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	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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?	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?	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.

Annex A

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	2
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	1
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

22 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Mary Redcliffe C of E Primary School, Bristol BS3 4DP

Thank you for being so helpful and friendly when our team of inspectors visited your school. We really enjoyed seeing your lessons, talking to you and the grown-ups and looking at the work that you have been doing. You told us that you really enjoy coming to school and your parents and carers are very pleased with how you are taught and cared for.

We think that yours is a good school that is getting even better because those who lead the school are very clear about how to improve it. The school makes sure that you all feel happy to be there because the grown-ups value the many different backgrounds that you come from. They provide good support for those of you who find work a struggle or do not speak English as your first language. As a result, you make good progress, and even though standards are below those of other schools, they are getting better. Teachers give you lots of interesting things to do and learn and you behave very well in lessons. A number of you told us that teachers 'make learning fun', which is great!

There are two things which we have asked the school to concentrate on to make it even better:

- Make sure that when you start in Reception classes, teachers are very clear about what you do and do not know.
- Make sure that when teachers mark your exercise books they tell you how your work can be improved.

Thank you again for helping us with the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Chris Nye Her Majesty's Inspector