



St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Yate

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109264
Local Authority South Gloucestershire
Inspection number 288331
Inspection dates 18–19 January 2007
Reporting inspector Carol Worthington

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Yate
Age range of pupils	4–11		Bristol BS37 5BG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01454 867155
Number on roll (school)	305	Fax number	01454 867157
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	David Harrex
		Headteacher	Mary Baskerville
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–11	18–19 January 2007	288331

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's is a larger than average primary school. The school takes 45 pupils per year so most classes are of mixed age. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is small. The school participates in the Sustaining Success Leadership Programme and Creative Learning projects.

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. Its pupils make good progress and achieve well. They are well prepared for secondary school by the high standards they attain in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. The quality of education in the Foundation Stage is good and young children achieve well, so they enter Year 1 with above average standards. These are generally maintained in Key Stage 1, but writing has been lower than expected for the last two years. In 2006 girls did not do as well as boys in mathematics. The school has put measures in place to remedy this by adopting a more practical, creative curriculum to increase motivation, encourage children to extend the independence learnt in the Foundation Stage, and develop literacy and numeracy through all curriculum areas.

Pupils are well cared for and their personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy school, are keen to learn, and attendance is good. They say teachers, including the headteacher, are always available for them. Some parents feel they do not enjoy such easy access and would welcome better communication and access to senior managers. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is enhanced by the strong Christian ethos. They behave sensibly and safely at playtime and in class. They are successfully encouraged to enjoy a healthy lifestyle and they are active in community work.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, improving from satisfactory in Key Stage 1, to often outstanding in Key Stage 2. Teachers have high expectations across the well-planned curriculum and cater for the whole ability and age range in their classes, most of which are mixed age. Leadership and management are good throughout the school. The headteacher's style of management successfully encourages all staff to participate and take responsibility. Improvement since the headteacher took up her post has been good, with considerable improvement in standards in Years 3 to 6.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve progress and achievement in Key Stage 1 to match that in Key Stage 2 by ensuring that all children are given equal opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy and become independent learners.
- improve the communication with parents and the accessibility of the leadership team.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are high and the results of the 2006 national tests in Year 6 were well above average in English, mathematics and science. This shows outstanding progress from the average attainment these pupils showed at Key Stage 1.

Pupils enter the school slightly above average and make good progress through the Foundation Stage to achieve above average standards, particularly in communication, language and literacy and in personal and social development. During Key Stage 1, these standards are maintained in reading and generally in mathematics. The standard of writing has been lower for the last two years and the teacher assessments at Key Stage 1 in 2006 were lower than those in 2005. Girls have done less well in attaining higher levels in mathematics, but generally better in reading. The school recognises that progress has historically been slower in Years 1 and 2 and is trying to improve this through staff changes and a less formal, more creative curriculum.

In Key Stage 2, results in 2006 show a sharp rise in standards. Except in 2005, standards have been rising considerably since the headteacher took up her post four years ago. In 2006, the school exceeded its targets and added value in Key Stage 2 that placed it in the top 5% of schools in the country. Achievement and progress are good and reflect the high standard of teaching and learning, especially in Years 5 and 6, where pupils often make outstanding progress. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress throughout the school because they receive good support from teaching assistants, and their teachers set work which challenges them to succeed. Pupils' high standard of literacy and numeracy mean they are well equipped with the key skills they will need for the next stage of their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual and moral development is enhanced by school's strong Christian ethos. Pupils develop confidence and self-esteem because the school values their opinions and often acts upon them. They enjoy school; they are keen to learn and attendance is good. They are attentive in the classroom and behave sensibly and safely at playtime, where older pupils willingly volunteer to be trained to help younger ones. Pupils all recognise bad behaviour, such as bullying, and know it will not be tolerated, but there have been a few incidents occurring at lunchtime which has caused the school to put in 'happy lunchtime' measures. These involve extra adult supervision, and older pupils leading younger ones in play. Pupils respond well to the school's healthy lifestyle programme. They nearly all choose some healthy food at lunchtimes, and a high proportion of them do extra sporting activities. Pupils' contribution to the school and wider community is strong, as is shown by their willingness to raise money for charity by writing and selling a school newspaper in one of the after-school clubs. Knowledge of other cultures is well developed through links with schools at home and abroad.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The standard of teaching and learning is generally good, and often better in the Years 5/6 classes, where lessons are meticulously planned to cater for the whole age and

ability range. The slower pace of learning in Key Stage 1, still apparent in Year 2, has occurred because teaching has not been as effective in the past because children were not given enough opportunity to develop further the independence learnt in the Foundation Stage. This is now improving, but there is some way to go before the newly-planned creative curriculum works its way through both Years 1 and 2.

Teachers' generally high expectations enable pupils to achieve well. In most lessons, teaching is well paced and engages the great majority of pupils. Interactive whiteboards are used well throughout the school. They stimulate pupils through, for example, the enjoyment of well-chosen animations to focus their ideas. Literacy is developed well through cross-curricular tasks, particularly in Key stage 2. An example of this is when Year 6 pupils had to write a booklet explaining the topic of food chains to younger pupils. Pupils are given plenty of opportunity to work in groups to strengthen their speaking and listening ability and to develop their capacity to work cooperatively. In Year 1, for example, pupils were seen to make appropriate choices of activity in a geography lesson and to discuss their activities sensibly as they worked cooperatively in groups, though in Year 2, pupils did not show the same independence in an English lesson.

In the classroom, teaching assistants are well briefed and well deployed. They also work effectively with small groups of pupils needing additional support out of class. The ability range within single and mixed-age classes is catered for well through the provision of tasks of differing degrees of challenge. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good and pupils develop their social skills and spoken language well. The teaching of phonics by teachers and teaching assistants is good and pupils learn to read well as a result.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum. Its major strength lies in the meticulous planning which enables pupils of all ages and abilities to have equal access and to achieve as well as they can. The Foundation Stage curriculum in the Reception class enables children to make a good start as confident independent learners, and these skills now develop further through the emphasis on a creative and enjoyable curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2. This is already motivating older children to learn but the full effects have yet to work through both Years 1 and 2.

The curriculum is extended with French, with all classes having one lesson a week, giving pupils an entry into the understanding of European culture as well as developing literacy. Many further opportunities for learning are provided through extra-curricular clubs and contacts with other schools abroad. For example, the Comenius project, where pupils make contact with schools in different parts of the world and learn about their cultures.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares well for its pupils and this contributes positively to their progress and overall enjoyment of school. Procedures for child protection are fully in place and pupils are confident that they would be supported should the need arise. As a Church of England school, St Mary's Christian ethos significantly fosters pupils' good spiritual and moral development. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and to take all opportunities to exercise. The school building and improved secure play area for the Foundation Stage provide a safe learning environment. Individual learning targets are understood by pupils. Assessment is regular and thorough; the school tracks the progress of individual pupils throughout their school life, and uses such data to improve standards. Pupils have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the school through the newly-revived School Council, in which they enthusiastically take part, but which has not yet been in place long enough to make a contribution to change.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good, better than the school's self-evaluation, which is otherwise thorough and accurate, taking into account the views of staff, governors, parents and pupils. The headteacher gives clear direction for improvement and has established a management style which encourages all staff to participate in leadership decisions. As a result, several recently qualified teachers have successfully taken on leadership responsibilities early in their careers. This has been so effective that the school now plays a leading role in several local educational networks. Other leaders give good support through their effective management of subjects and their encouragement of pupils to develop as independent learners. All leaders and managers do their best to ensure that all pupils receive equal access to the curriculum and are set challenging work. Extensive monitoring and evaluation of learning and progress in the wide age and ability range in each class is designed to help pupils meet their targets, particularly in Key Stage 2. As a result, pupils' achievement has improved immensely since the last inspection and is at least good, and often outstanding, by the time they leave.

The governing body is supportive and has a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The chairman of governors is very active in supporting the school's promotion of its Christian ethos, but several of the governors are new and are still learning about their role and responsibilities.

Most parents are supportive of the school and are pleased with the standard of teaching and the accessibility of the teachers, but a significant minority would like better communication with the leadership team.

The school's self-evaluation is thorough and mostly accurate. All the school's staff and governors contribute, and the views of parents and pupils are taken into account throughout annual questionnaires. Improvement since the last inspection has been

good, with considerable improvement in standards at Key Stage 2. This shows that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

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?	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	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?	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	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?	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

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	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

Thank you for making us feel so welcome at your friendly school and for being so polite and well-mannered. We really enjoyed talking to you and watching you play and learn. We can see why you like school and we are sure that you are getting a good education because of the way your teachers make sure you all have work to do that helps you to do well. In the top class, you are especially well prepared for your secondary school when the time comes.

Other things we liked about St Mary's:

- your teachers keep a good check on your progress and their marking helps you to understand where you have made mistakes and encourages you to meet your targets
- you told us that all your teachers, including the headteacher, are always available for you
- you have lots of clubs to enjoy
- you appreciate good behaviour and know what the consequences are for bullying.

Things we think could be improved:

- your teachers could make sure that some of you do even better in writing and maths in Years 1 and 2, by helping you to practice them in the more exciting lessons they are providing for you
- your parents could be given better access to information and to the headteacher and other senior staff.

Good luck for your future at St. Mary's and beyond.