



# St Mary's Church of England School, Aylesbury

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 110416  
**Local Authority** Buckinghamshire  
**Inspection number** 288665  
**Inspection dates** 28–29 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Charalambos Loizou

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Keen Close
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled		Fairford Leys
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Aylesbury HP19 7WF
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01296 482094
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	343	<b>Fax number</b>	01296 339609
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Stephen Collins
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Lois A Crane
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 December 2001		

<b>Age group</b> 4–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 28–29 November 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 288665
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a large primary school situated in a mixed area of private and social housing. Nearly half of the pupils come from outside the immediate area. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Other pupils come from a broad range of backgrounds, although none are in the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is similar to that of most schools. The school has close links with local churches and with other schools and colleges.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding education. The pupils achieve extremely well and standards are high. They mature into very well behaved and responsible young people. The headteacher, senior management team and governors provide outstanding leadership. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher, combined with the innovative and energetic leadership of senior staff, has guided excellent improvements to the school since its last inspection. The leadership team and governors know the school's strengths very well and what needs to improve further. The school's view of itself is accurate and its track record of raising standards and improving teaching show that it has excellent capacity to continue improving. There are excellent partnerships with the community and with other schools and organisations. Parents think highly of the school, one rightly commenting, 'My son has been through the whole school and is now in his final year. We found all of his teachers, without exception, to be superb'.

The teaching and curriculum are outstanding and there is excellent provision in the Foundation Stage, where children experience stimulating and challenging activities. Throughout the school, consistently effective teaching of reading, writing and problem solving skills in mathematics result in high standards in English and mathematics. Consequently, pupils read fluently with confidence, write independently with accuracy, and successfully tackle problems in mathematics. They apply these essential skills very well in other subjects, including science, where standards are also high. Teachers provide exciting activities so that pupils' enjoyment of learning is highly evident. Examples include Year 3 pupils designing Aztec costumes during their special history day, and the school's writing week that provided exciting opportunities for pupils to write letters to important people such as local parish councillors and even to the Queen. Interesting activities such as these are common features of the school's outstanding curriculum. Teachers' meticulous planning incorporates strong links between subjects and very effective use is made of high quality resources.

Assessment is used well to ensure that tasks in lessons are well matched to the needs and abilities of the pupils. Teachers and support staff regularly check the pupils' performance, although the assessment of younger pupils does not always lead to accurate predictions of how well they may achieve in the future. The leadership team has identified this and has already begun to put in place effective measures to provide targets that realistically match the pupils' achievements by the end of Year 2.

The staff take outstanding care of the pupils and support them very well. This has a positive effect on their excellent personal development and well-being, which, when combined with their academic development, prepare them very well for their future lives. Pupils enjoy school very much and this is reflected in above average attendance rates. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They show caring attitudes to each other and develop strong friendships. They reflect thoughtfully on values such as kindness, friendship and cooperation and learn to respect different cultures and religions. They have a very good understanding of healthy living and the importance of exercise through the many opportunities to take part in sports. The

staff value pupils' efforts very much, and all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, learn and play in a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment.

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

- Refine early assessments of Reception children and pupils in Years 1 and 2 to ensure that their individual targets are accurate.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Standards are high and achievement is outstanding. The pupils make excellent progress in relation to their average starting points. Children in the Foundation Stage make rapid progress because of highly effective teaching. By the start of Year 1, children exceed the goals expected for their age.

Standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average by the end of Year 2 and are very high by the end of Year 6. The most recent national tests show that Year 6 pupils reached very challenging targets, reflecting consistently effective teaching. A very good proportion of pupils reach higher levels in the tests in both Year 2 and Year 6. Fluctuations in standards in the past reflect some inconsistencies in the way targets were being set for younger pupils. However, the school has made a good start sharpening assessment. Consequently, information about the pupils' performance is providing a more realistic prediction of how well they will achieve by the end of Year 2. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are extremely well cared for and supported and make excellent progress as a result.

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

### **Grade: 1**

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding and is a major strength of the school. Pupils are polite and extremely well behaved. They enjoy learning and are proud to take on responsibilities to support and care for others. Relationships are very positive amongst and between pupils and staff. Pupils confidently, but modestly, demonstrate a very positive approach in lessons and other times. Both their strong academic and personal development prepares them very well for their next steps in life and learning.

Pupils are proud of their school and gain from its strong spiritual and moral ethos, as reflected in the large number of pupils from different faith groups that participate in the extra activities, including the school's Christian Union club. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. They learn to collaborate and work in teams and do so very well. They are thoughtful and considerate to others, as demonstrated in the responsibilities given to pupils, including their involvement in the highly effective school council.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. In the Foundation Stage, children learn about themselves and their world through stimulating and engaging activities. Early reading, writing and mathematics skills are taught effectively and prepare the children very well for the next stages of their learning. From an early age, pupils quickly learn their letter sounds and number calculation skills. Throughout the school teachers plan their work meticulously and make very good use of resources and interactive whiteboards. Teachers provide manageable steps for the pupils to follow, which are usually displayed on whiteboards to focus their learning. In an excellent English lesson, Year 2 pupils could clearly see what they must do to use alliteration, nouns and adjectives in their poems. The teacher displayed logical steps that helped them to quickly improve their sentence structure. Lessons are challenging with engaging activities so pupils respond with enthusiasm. For example, pupils in Year 6 achieved very high standards when inspired to write their own versions of characters' responses in Macbeth. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning and provide very effective help for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The quality of the curriculum is excellent and well balanced to support the academic and personal development of the pupils. There is excellent enrichment that includes visits by pupils, and visitors to the school. Pupils' enjoyment of learning is enhanced by an outstanding range of extra activities in which there are high levels of participation. Clubs both during and after school include a wide range of sports, musical activities, chess, Latin and the Christian Union club. English skills are enhanced through activities such as role-play and debate as part of work in other subjects. The school provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their personal skills through a carefully tailored programme of personal, social and health education. Pupils reflect on their own learning through activities that develop their thinking skills. They improve their language skills through excellent opportunities to begin to learn German and Spanish in Year 5 with their teachers, and French in Year 6 through the school's association with an Aylesbury secondary school.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are outstanding. The school conducts effective health and safety audits. Risk assessments are carefully carried out, for instance, when teachers organise visits to places of interest. The school has very good systems to support the safe recruitment of staff with effective checks made on all adults who work with pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are

very well supported. The school tracks pupils' progress well, and takes effective action in cases where pupils are not doing as well as they could, as well as setting challenging work for brighter pupils. This strongly supports their excellent progress. Recent improvements to target setting for younger pupils are beginning to provide more accurate targets.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school knows itself extremely well and this is reflected in the high quality of school self-evaluation. The energetic and innovative leadership of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior management team has guided the school through rapid improvements since the last inspection. Consequently, standards are much higher and the teaching is consistently strong across the school. The management of curriculum subjects is highly effective and has resulted in a broad and balanced programme of activities that stimulate the pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Planning for improvement takes very good account of the views of pupils, staff and parents. The effective development of teaching has ensured that standards improve.

The governors are excellent and a real credit to the school. They hold the school to account very well through systematic and focused visits to lessons and rigorous monitoring of the school's performance. They have successfully promoted the school to parents and the local community, which accounts for its increasing popularity. Resources are of high quality, including displays of pupils' work which create a very positive learning environment. The school's track record of improvement demonstrates that it has excellent capacity to continue improving and to maintain high standards.

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## Inspection judgements

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	1
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**

The inspectors were delighted to visit your school recently and I write to thank you for your help and for making us feel very welcome.

Your school provides an outstanding education.

There are so many excellent things about your school that it is hard for me to pick out the very best. However, these are what impressed the inspectors most:

- you are extremely well behaved and try very hard in lessons
- your teachers are helping you to do very well in lessons and give you lots of opportunities to help other pupils
- you enjoy learning and reach high standards
- your parents are very pleased with the school
- the staff take extremely good care of you and this helps you develop excellent attitudes
- your headteacher, staff and governors manage the school extremely well and do a great deal to provide extra activities.

I have asked your teachers to:

- keep a close check on how well younger pupils are doing to make sure their targets are accurate.

Well done, and I wish you all the very best.

Yours faithfully

Charalambos LoizouLead Inspector