



Mary Dean's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113418
Local Authority Plymouth
Inspection number 289620
Inspection date 2 November 2006
Reporting inspector Shirley Billington

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 | Mary Dean Avenue |
| School category | Voluntary controlled | | Tamerton Foliot |
| Age range of pupils | 3-11 | | Plymouth PL5 4LS |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01752 773521 |
| Number on roll (school) | 320 | Fax number | 01752 773324 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Steve Gerry |
| | | Headteacher | Nigel Sparrow |
| Date of previous school inspection | 25 June 2001 | | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a large primary school that draws its pupils from a wide area. The proportion of pupils that enter or leave the school, other than at the usual times, is higher than in most schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average. Children's attainment on starting school is broadly in line with expectations, although an increasing number have limited skills in some areas, particularly in communication and language. A new Nursery opened in April 2005 but so far only a small number of children have attended this prior to starting in Reception.

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: 2

This is a good school that has successfully maintained a strong track record of high standards in English, mathematics and science over the past five years. Underpinning this success are good teaching and strong leadership and management that ensure high expectations for the pupils. Pupils achieve well, particularly in Years 3 to 6, so that they leave the school with very secure key skills and with confidence in their abilities to work independently and with their peers. The vast majority of parents are very positive about the work of the school, as was evident in the comment that, 'going to (Mary Dean's) has given them a good solid basis for the rest of their lives'.

A good curriculum is also a key factor in the pupils' successes. It is enhanced well by an excellent range of opportunities to pursue an interest, sample a new activity or take part in a wide variety of sports. Good systems for the care and guidance of pupils ensure their individual well-being and a good range of support programmes has been introduced over the past year to boost their skills where necessary. Pupils' progress is tracked as they go through the school, but current systems are unwieldy and do not generate enough information to help the school to pinpoint exactly how well different groups are doing. Good use is made of information from standardised tests in Years 3 to 6 to check how well pupils are doing. However, the progress being made by pupils from the time they start school through to the end of Year 2 is not tracked carefully enough. The vast majority do well, but a few more able pupils do not reach the levels that might be expected, particularly in writing and mathematics.

Pupils' personal development is good and they are very enthusiastic about learning. This starts in the Nursery and Reception Years where a good range of activities effectively promotes children's skills in all areas. Older pupils particularly appreciate the way that the school recognises and rewards their achievements, both academically and personally. They make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community.

The school is not complacent and senior staff are regularly involved in a range of activities to help them to identify what is going well and what needs to be improved. Action is taken where necessary, so that, for example, the deployment of teaching assistants has been adjusted to better meet pupils' needs. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and pupils' skills in this subject are now up to expected levels. The school knows itself well and is well placed to make further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement a more efficient system for tracking and analysing pupils' progress throughout the school.
- Ensure that more able pupils attain the levels of which they are capable at the end of Year 2, particularly in writing and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well to reach standards that are above average, and sometimes exceptionally high, in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6.

Children make a good start in Reception and the vast majority are working within, and a significant proportion exceed, expected levels at the start of Year 1. Children are well prepared for the next stage of their learning and most continue to do well in Years 1 and 2 so that standards at the end of Year 2 are above average. However, a small number of more able pupils in these year groups make satisfactory, rather than good, progress particularly in mathematics and writing.

In Years 3 to 6, progress accelerates and pupils do particularly well. One of the reasons for this is the well targeted support programme that boosts key skills, for example in reading. Over the past three years the gains made by pupils in Years 3 to 6 have been significantly higher than in most schools nationally. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities benefit from specific help to address their areas of need and they also make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils throughout the school behave well and have very positive attitudes to learning. Their attendance is good. They are keen to contribute to discussions in lessons and, as one pupil commented, they particularly enjoy working together. Pupils respond especially well to opportunities to pursue a particular interest, for example in sport or in ICT, and to participate in extra-curricular activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show very good appreciation of the need to consider the well-being of others, as is shown, for example, by their good understanding that agreeing class rules at the beginning of the year is important to help everybody to learn. Some of the older pupils act as peer mentors for others who have some difficulty with concentration or application in lessons. They take this seriously and are positive about how well it works in most cases. Pupils have a good awareness of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and many are keen participants in regular physical activities at break times and after school. However, although they know the importance of eating healthily, many do not put this into practice, bringing chocolate and crisps as their playtime snacks. The school council is taking this issue seriously and discussing what might be done to discourage this. Pupils make a very good contribution to the school community by taking on responsibilities and voicing their views, and to the local community by participating in local events such as the village carnival. Older pupils are mature and responsible, have a good range of key skills and are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are well organised and purposeful and teachers make good use of resources to support teaching and learning. Interactive whiteboards are used well to demonstrate teaching points and to engage pupils' attention. Teaching assistants are used well to support groups and individuals during lessons but occasionally could be involved more in the introductions; for example, by noting key words needed for the tasks that are to follow or by being involved in a discussion. Throughout the school, pupils are keen and well-motivated learners. They work well together and enjoy opportunities to use their initiative, for example by planning and carrying out independent research work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has been adapted well to meet the needs of pupils and to ensure continuing good achievement. Specific support programmes have been introduced to boost key skills where necessary. A trial programme to extend speaking and listening skills for children in Reception and Year 1 is proving successful in boosting their confidence and increasing their vocabulary, and this is to be extended further to support older pupils where appropriate. The curriculum is enhanced well through a range of visits and visitors, with residential visits in Years 5 and 6 being a real highlight for the pupils. There is an excellent range of clubs and activities to suit a wide range of interests, from 'salt dough' for children in Reception to competitive cross country running.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are cared for well and are confident that if they have any concerns they have an adult to turn to. They are aware of their targets for improvement and feel that they get help to achieve these. They are very confident about the help given to them. One pupil summed up the views of many when she said, 'all teachers are very supportive'. Other pupils talked about how much they had been helped by teaching assistants and how they felt their skills in reading had improved with some individual help. Pupils have a very good understanding of safe practices and this is enhanced well through specific activities, for example learning about the dangers of drug misuse and how to care for their teeth. Good use is made of information on pupils' performance in tests to target extra support where appropriate, but there is a gap in the way that assessment information is analysed for younger children to ensure that all groups make equally good progress. This will change shortly with the introduction of a computerised system. Pupils who join the school at a later stage than others are positive about the way that they are helped to settle in and about all the activities in which they can get involved.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Strong leadership has ensured that high standards at the end of Year 6 have been maintained over the past five years. There is a good range of systems for checking on the school's effectiveness, and these provide useful information on where to target resources for maximum impact. Senior staff have rightly recognised that these systems could be refined further, for example to provide more effective ways of evaluating teaching and identifying areas for improvement. Data are analysed regularly to check on the school's performance but this is done in more depth from the end of Year 2 through to Year 6 than lower down the school. As a result, the school does not have all the information that it needs to track and analyse how well all pupils are doing. Governors play a key role in the strategic management of the school. The governing body is well organised to make best use of individual governors' skills.

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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? | 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

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| 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

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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 | 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 | 1 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |

The quality of provision

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|---|---|
| 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

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| 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 | 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

You may remember that I visited your school recently to find out how well it is doing. I talked to quite a few of you around the school, in the playground and in meetings and would like to thank you for all the information that you gave me. I thought you might be interested in what my report is saying. Yours is a good school and you do well in your learning so that at the end of Year 6 you have achieved high standards in your work in English, mathematics and science. This means that you are very well prepared for moving to secondary schools and for later life.

- Some of the other highlights that I found are:
- You really enjoy learning, work well together and behave well so that you get the most out of your lessons.
- You make a very good contribution to the school through taking on responsibilities and putting ideas forward in the school council.
- The headteacher and staff are always looking for ways to make the school even better and particularly to give you extra help if you need it.
- You are taught well and staff make sure that you are well looked after – some of you told me how much you enjoy working with the teaching assistants on some special activities.
- You have a wonderful choice of 'extra' activities to do in clubs at lunchtime and after school.
- I have suggested two things that the school needs to work on now:
- Make sure that the systems used to track your progress give good information on how you are all doing.
- Make sure children in Reception through to Year 2 who are quick to learn do as well as they possibly can, especially in writing and mathematics.

Thank you again for all your help. I enjoyed meeting so many of you and I hope that the cross country went well!