



St Mary's Church of England (VA) Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115159
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290148
Inspection dates 29–30 November 2006
Reporting inspector Florence Olajide

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Marsh Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Burnham-on-crouch
Age range of pupils	4–11		Essex CM0 8LZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01621 782626
Number on roll (school)	169	Fax number	01621 783601
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Pauline Wells
		Headteacher	Mrs Geraldine Denham-Hale
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average size school. Pupils come from a mix of private and local authority housing within the town of Burnham and the surrounding villages. Virtually all pupils are White British and none speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average and only a very small number are entitled to free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some good features. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 is good and this enables pupils to make swift progress in their learning and reach above average standards by the end of Year 2. In Key Stage 2, much of the teaching is satisfactory and pupils' progress is slower. Pupils continue to reach above average standards. Standards and provision in the Foundation Stage are good. Children have access to a stimulating learning environment and they receive good teaching. Teachers check their progress regularly and by the end of the Foundation Stage, most children reach the expected standards and some exceed them.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The extra-curricular provision is exciting and it motivates the pupils who say that they enjoy school because teachers make it 'fun and interesting'. However, there are weaknesses in the teaching and curriculum because teachers do not always plan fitting learning activities, which enable all pupils to make good progress.

Pupils' personal development is good because the school provides pupils with effective pastoral care. Pupils are articulate, friendly and well behaved and have good attitudes to learning. They live up to the high expectations that the school has of them and they take responsibility for caring for each other seriously. They are also proud of the sporting awards they have gained. Systems for ensuring that they receive clear guidance about their work are not used consistently by all staff, which limits pupils' knowledge of how they can improve and slows their progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has a history of significant leadership challenges over the past decade. This has had an impact on the school's capacity to tackle improvements quickly enough. Currently there is no permanent deputy headteacher, although the post will be filled in January 2007. Nonetheless, school improvement priorities are strongly focused on raising achievement and leaders have a sound understanding of what needs to be done. They have established suitable ways to improve the school and create a firm foundation on which it can build. Many of the initiatives aimed at raising achievement are either at an early stage of implementation or are yet to be implemented and evaluated for their effects on pupils' progress. The school has made reasonable progress with the issues raised in the previous inspection. It provides satisfactory value for money and has satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better.
- Enable all pupils, particularly those who are more able, to make good progress by ensuring that learning tasks are closely matched to their needs and abilities.
- Ensure that systems for checking pupils' progress and for providing them with useful feedback are firmly embedded.
- Ensure that planned initiatives are implemented and thoroughly evaluated for their impact on pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter the school with attainment that are slightly below average. Through the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 they make good progress. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are above average and the proportions reaching the higher than average Level 3 in Year 2 and Level 5 in Year 6 are better than in many schools.

Between Years 3 and 6, pupils only make satisfactory progress, given their starting points. Pupils' achievement and standards in English are high but are lower in science and particularly in mathematics. This is the case for less and more able pupils. Closing this gap between pupils' standards in English and other subjects remains a priority for the school. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are average. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well, enjoy school and make good progress in their personal development. Their attendance is above average. The older pupils contribute well to the school community. For example, they represent younger ones on the school council and gather their views about assemblies. They also contribute to the wider community through a range of fundraising activities for charities. Pupils enjoy choosing a healthy lunch and like the choices that they now have. The school is working towards the Healthy Schools Award to improve provision further. Pupils develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through the school's Christian ethos and the good opportunities to reflect on their actions. Although pupils' cultural awareness is good, there is room to improve their understanding of life in multicultural Britain. Pupils know how to stay safe and their good basic skills equip them well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although some of the teaching is good, most is satisfactory. Teaching assistants provide pupils with good individual support during lessons. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with adults and are eager to learn. However, the teaching does not always take advantage of these high levels of motivation to stretch the pupils, particularly those who are more able. Some teachers have difficulty with matching work accurately to pupils' needs and abilities.

In many lessons, teachers are clear about what they expect pupils to learn. They give pupils good opportunities to share their learning with each other, for example, through 'talk partners'. They ensure that pupils are involved in checking how much and how

well they have learnt. They use the end of lessons to assess how well pupils have attained the learning objectives. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. Some teachers give pupils very useful feedback about how to improve their work, but this is not consistent across the school. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to use questioning effectively to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A wide range of visits, visitors and out of school activities make learning interesting and develop pupils' skills well in activities such as aikido and cricket. Teachers develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills appropriately in other subjects. Their skills contribute positively to the above average standards in most subjects. There is sound provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Teachers plan different activities for different ability groups, but the quality of this planning is variable and does not adequately ensure that all pupils make good progress. In the past, the use of additional learning programmes has been erratic, leading to uneven support for pupils who require extra help. The school has identified pupils who are gifted and talented and is beginning to develop ways to help them do as well as they can. The school has helpful partnerships with a range of community organisations and these enhance the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Procedures for safeguarding pupils are rigorous and staff are trained in child protection matters. The school has begun to track pupils' progress and those who are not doing well enough are now being identified, although this is at an early stage of development. Pupils have targets for English and mathematics. These have been introduced only recently and some are not written in a way that is easy for pupils to understand and remember. Consequently, pupils are not always familiar with them and at times do not know what they need to do to improve. The school works effectively with parents and other organisations to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities receive adequate support. The school takes account of the views of pupils and parents, but a significant minority of parents perceive that their views are not really listened to.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher strongly motivates staff and involves all in taking responsibility for pupils' achievement. As a result, subject leaders are now well informed about standards across the school and are becoming increasingly effective in their leadership roles. Staff and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the school has begun to use assessment information more effectively to track pupils' progress and plan suitable additional support for them, where necessary. These changes are very recent and have not been implemented long enough to have

a significant impact on pupils' progress. They have not been evaluated. The school has a number of other planned initiatives, which have the potential to raise achievement. However, these too are yet to be fully implemented.

Financial management is sound and the school has recovered from previous budgetary difficulties. Governors play an active role in the life of the school and discharge their responsibilities effectively, for example, through frequent monitoring visits. Although there have been many changes in the membership of the governing body over the past two years, there are suitable arrangements for inducting new governors.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
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

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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

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?	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?	3

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?	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	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

1 December 2006

Dear Pupils

St Mary's Church of England (VA) Primary School, Marsh Road, Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex, CM0 8LZ

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and we were impressed with how confidently you were able to tell us what you think about your school.

We found the following good things about your school:

- You like school and find the activities, particularly the many clubs on offer, fun and interesting.
- You behave well and work hard.
- You contribute your views clearly through the school council, which helps the school run smoothly.
- You take your responsibilities seriously and you are good at helping each other and the younger pupils.
- The younger children are taught well, which helps them to do well.
- Most of you reach good standards in English, mathematics and science.

We feel that some of you do not do as well as you could. To make your school even better we have asked your teachers to:

- improve the teaching by making sure that your work is just right for you, so that all of you, particularly those of you who are able to cope with more difficult work, achieve even better;
- regularly check how well you are doing and give you helpful ideas about what you can do to improve your work;
- reflect on the changes they are making, to be sure that they work well.

We hope that you will continue to work hard and we wish you all the best for the future.

Florence Olajide

(Lead inspector)