



St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116799
Local Authority Herefordshire
Inspection number 290636
Inspection dates 30–31 January 2007
Reporting inspector Clive Lewis

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Station Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Credenhill
Age range of pupils	4–11		Hereford HR4 7DW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01432 760408
Number on roll (school)	156	Fax number	01432 761418
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ian Goodson
		Headteacher	John Moynihan
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's is a school of average size. As many as half of pupils join and leave the school partway through their primary education because of the movement of families to and from the local army base and housing association properties. Until recently, the school has also been affected by quite high staff turnover.

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 providing a well-balanced education for its pupils that has a positive impact on all aspects of their development. The school is well led and pupils make good progress because of the good leadership and management, good teaching and the positive working environment. There is a very high level of pupil mobility and this constant flux of pupils has had an impact on the school's overall results. The school has recovered well from a prolonged period of significant staff turbulence.

Improvements made in the quality of teaching and increased staff stability mean that all pupils now benefit from consistently good teaching; this has removed past fluctuations in pupils' rates of progress. Achievement is good. However, the school is aware that the most able pupils have not always done as well as they should in English and mathematics and pupils of all abilities are not given enough opportunities to develop and use their writing skills in subjects other than English.

Children in the Reception Year make good progress, so that standards at the start of Year 1 are above average. Pupils are now making consistently good progress in Years 1 to 6 as a result of improved teaching. Consequently, standards are improving as pupils move through the school and benefit from the improved teaching. Standards are only average, however, at the end of Year 6, because so many pupils come and go from the school. This means that many of the pupils end up taking their Year 6 tests at other schools and pupils who join St Mary's partway through their primary education have not always had the benefit of having made such good progress at their previous schools. In addition, significant turbulence in the teaching staff when these pupils were in Years 3 and 4 resulted in some gaps in their learning and insufficient challenge for more able pupils. This has now been rectified. Teaching and learning are good. Typically, lessons are lively and interesting and, as a result, pupils take part with real enthusiasm and become confident learners. Pupils are provided with a good curriculum that includes a wide range of extra-curricular activities, a good emphasis on physical activities and the encouragement of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils clearly enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance. Relationships are very good and play a key role in the good progress pupils make in their personal development. The provision for care, guidance and support is good. The responses to the parents' questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive, with one parent commenting, 'My children love the school and I believe it gives them a fantastic start in life.' Of particular note are the very positive comments of parents whose children have joined the school after the normal time of entry. This is the result of the very effective systems the school has in place to support newcomers. These new pupils are made to feel very welcome so that they quickly settle in and do well at the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards for more-able pupils in English and mathematics.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use and build on what they learn in English when writing in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry in the Reception Year is broadly average. Provision for Reception children is good. As a result, children achieve well and almost all reach, and several exceed, the early learning goals for children of that age by the end of the Reception year. Pupils achieve well, although standards at the end of Year 6 are only average because so many pupils leave and join the school partway through their primary education. Over half of the pupils currently in Year 6 did not begin their primary education in the Reception class and a significant number joined the school in Years 3 to 6. Pupils joining the school in this way make good progress from frequently low levels of attainment on entry because of the school's good induction procedures and support. More able pupils have not always done as well as they should. This is because of previous turbulence in the teaching staff and some former weaknesses in teaching. The school is now providing appropriate challenge for more able pupils through well-planned and challenging activities in lessons and a range of additional opportunities, but these changes have not had time to filter through into higher levels in the Year 6 tests in English and mathematics. The school has identified that standards in writing have fluctuated in recent years. This is because pupils have not had enough opportunities to use and build on what they learn in English through writing in other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because they benefit from good support that is well matched to their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Relationships within the school are positive and staff and pupils show respect for one another. As a result, pupils behave well in lessons, around the school and in the playground. Pupils are friendly and sociable and are interested in finding out about different cultures and faiths. They enjoy coming to school and, as a result, their attendance is good.

Pupils contribute well to the school and wider community. Members of the school council, for example, take their role seriously and are enthusiastically fundraising for the outdoor classroom and shelter. Those on the Eco-committee, meanwhile, say they are 'responsible for making the school healthy', and encourage others to recycle and make green choices. Pupils are made to feel safe and know that there is always someone they can go to if they have problems. They know how to keep healthy and look after themselves and are safety-conscious around the school. They feel secure, and confident that any instances of bullying will be tackled firmly by staff. Their good social skills and their ability to work well with others prepare them effectively for the next stage of their education, although their key literacy and numeracy skills are only satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good relationships and high expectations for behaviour mean that classrooms are welcoming places where pupils feel ready to learn. Lessons are typically lively and full of pace and challenge, so that pupils are motivated and learn well. In English and mathematics, teachers focus well on the areas where standards need to improve. Writing tasks are carefully chosen to appeal to boys as well as girls and, in mathematics lessons, teachers work hard to ensure pupils understand basic concepts. A judicious mix of support and assessment is provided for pupils joining the school partway through their education and this helps these pupils to quickly settle into the school.

Teachers organise teaching groups carefully so that all pupils get work at the right level to help them achieve as well as they can. Marking of pupils' work is good in Years 1 and 2, linked closely to pupils' targets and showing them clearly what they need to do to improve. This is not done as consistently in Years 3 to 6, however. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from good support from teachers and teaching assistants so that they are helped to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is an appropriately strong focus in the curriculum on English, mathematics and science, and there is an appropriate determination to improve standards in these areas. The school adopts a good range of strategies to support the needs of those pupils who join the school partway through their education, who often need a boost to bring up their standards in these core subjects. The school is intent on providing a more creative curriculum for pupils and, to this end, has provided them with the chance to learn French and more opportunities for music and creative arts activities. Exciting initiatives, such as the recent China project, inspire and challenge pupils. The school has recognised that there have not been enough opportunities for writing in subjects such as history, geography and religious education so that pupils can further improve their skills.

A good range of extra activities and visits significantly enriches the curriculum. Pupils enjoy many sports, as well as music and other clubs. They are very enthusiastic about the residential visits available to them in Key Stage 2 which give them the chance to develop their independence and help them learn more about themselves.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents agree overwhelmingly that their children are well looked after, one commenting, 'All the staff are very kind and caring to all the children'. Vulnerable children are well supported through robust child protection procedures. Bullying and racist incidents

are rare and handled effectively. Academic guidance is good. Pupils' individual progress is routinely assessed, tracked and monitored, and this information is used to identify and target support for pupils who may be at risk of underachieving. Pupils are aware of their targets, although teachers' marking does not always make clear enough references to pupils' targets for learning or what they could do to do better. There are very effective systems to assess new arrivals swiftly and sensitively so that they can be placed in the correct groups in class and supported where necessary. The school's strong and effective links with outside agencies ensure good support for pupils and families who need extra help.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, senior staff and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and set appropriate targets for its development, clearly linked to school improvement. They successfully promote the well-being of all pupils. The methods for evaluating the school's work, the effectiveness of decisions and the areas to be improved are rigorous. The school is rightly proud of the recent improvement in national test results, particularly the significant improvement in science. However, senior management are well aware that there remain areas for further improvement, particularly in writing and in the achievement of the most able pupils. Subject leaders manage their areas of responsibility well and, together with the effective use of external expertise, are having a positive impact on pupils' learning.

The school takes good account of the views of parents and other stakeholders. This is reflected in turn in the very positive view that parents have of the school. One wrote: 'My child only joined the school in Year 5 and she has settled in well and become a very happy and confident Year 6 pupil'. Because school self-evaluation is rigorous and because of the track record of improvements in teaching, planning and assessment systems, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

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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?	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	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	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	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.

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	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

Thank you for welcoming me and my colleague to your school. We enjoyed visiting the school and seeing you at work and play. You gave us lots of comments that helped us to form a good picture of your school.

We think your school is a good school. This is what we found out:

- Your teachers and other adults in the school help you to learn well.
- You behave well and you know how to tell right from wrong.
- You clearly enjoy coming to school because there are lots of interesting activities for you to take part in.
- We were impressed that the school is helping you to stay healthy by encouraging you to eat healthy foods and take regular exercise, and that you do so.
- We also liked the way that you get on very well together and support each other.

There are two things I have asked your teachers to do that would make it even better:

- Help more of you to achieve the higher levels in English and mathematics.
- Give you more chances to practise your writing in history and other subjects.

I think that your school is one of which you should be proud. I am confident that, with your help, the school will improve still further.

Good luck to you all in the future.