

St Marys V.C. Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121045
Local Authority	NORFOLK
Inspection number	291975
Inspection dates	30 April –1 May 2007
Reporting inspector	David Wynford-Jones

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	259
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lorraine Zima
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Moyes
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2001
School address	Swan Lane Long Stratton Norwich Norfolk NR15 2UY
Telephone number	01508 530459
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

St Mary's V.C. Junior is of a broadly similar size to schools of its type. The vast majority of the pupils are of White British heritage and almost all of the pupils transfer from the Infant School which shares the site. The percentage of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities is below the national average. Attainment on entry has declined over the last four years and is now broadly average. The school has recently gained the 'School Active Sports Mark' and the 'Norfolk Healthy School Award'. The school was reorganised from a middle (8-12) to a junior school (7-11) in September 2006. The Headteacher has been in post since September 2005.

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 which provides sound value for money. The dedicated and sound leadership and management of the headteacher have contributed to the successful re-organisation of the school. Approximately half of the pupils were new to the school at the start of this academic year and they have settled in well. Pupils enjoy attending school and their attendance is above average. This is because the school provides a safe and caring environment. The standards they reach in mathematics and science are consistently above average. In English, standards are improving and are at least in line with national expectations, but there are weaknesses in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported appropriately and the vast majority of pupils make sound progress. Overall, achievement is satisfactory. There are some examples of good and outstanding teaching but the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall because too few lessons are taught to a good or better standard. The majority of pupils behave well and have a positive attitude to learning but, in some lessons, some pupils' behaviour is disruptive, resulting in many pupils' making insufficient progress. In these lessons teacher expectations are not high enough, the pace of the lessons is too slow or pupils are not clear about what they have to do to improve their work. In several classes, the marking of pupils' work does not give enough guidance for improvement.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is enhanced effectively by a good range of extra-curricular activities; visits to places of interest and visitors to the school, which pupils say, 'helps them to understand their work'. The school has recently introduced 'setting' in English lessons in order to improve standards. It is too early to judge the impact of this initiative but early indications suggest that several pupils are making better progress. The school is currently reviewing the way subjects are taught because the links between subjects are not sufficiently well developed. Aspects of healthy living, staying safe, and the development of skills to help pupils in their future lives are not reinforced enough in lessons. Nevertheless, although some pupils are still reluctant to adopt healthy eating, they are developing a satisfactory awareness of healthy living and staying safe, and acquiring the appropriate skills which will help them in their future lives. Pupils make a good contribution to the local community; they are eager to take responsibility and to become members of the school council. They want to find out about other cultures and ways of life. This is increasingly being developed through their work in art and music. Overall care, guidance and support are satisfactory which results in pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development also being satisfactory.

Although some of the school's self-evaluation judgements were not confirmed by the inspectors, the leadership and management of the school are sound and the capacity to improve is satisfactory. More challenging statutory targets in English and mathematics are being set and areas for development have been correctly identified. However, there is insufficient rigour in monitoring and evaluating the quality of the work of the school and in ensuring that all members of staff are fully aware of what is expected of them. Governors are supportive of the school and are beginning to take a more active role in its development. Appropriate systems are in place to ensure that the school meets the safeguarding arrangements for pupils.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in English.
- Ensure that more lessons are taught to a good or better standard.
- Enhance pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy by developing cross-curricular links.
- Develop a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The vast majority of pupils make sound progress so that their achievement is satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 6 are improving. For the last three years standards were above the national average in mathematics and science. Standards in English were not as high, but they have risen from below the national average in 2004 to standards similar to the national average in 2006. This is because the school has placed appropriate emphasis on improving pupils' writing skills. Standards in the current Year 6 are above expectations in English, mathematics and science, but pupils do not achieve as well as they could in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive satisfactory support in lessons, enabling them to make sound progress in relationship to their starting points and needs. Pupils' attainment in physical education, music and art is above expectations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Most pupils like coming to school. They say that teachers deal firmly with incidents of bullying and that they feel safe and well cared for. Pupils generally enjoy lessons when teachers make them interesting. Most pupils behave well but, at times, the behaviour of a small minority is inappropriate. This tends to be when lessons are uninteresting and the pace of learning is pedestrian. Overall behaviour is satisfactory.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is satisfactory. Links with the local community are strong and the school supports many charities, which helps pupils to understand their social responsibilities. Pupils have a satisfactory awareness of the importance of a healthy diet. They have a better understanding of the need to take regular exercise to stay fit. The current lack of opportunities to develop their skills across the curriculum restricts pupils' preparation for their future lives. The school's self-evaluation of pupils' personal development as 'good' was not confirmed by the inspectors, who judged it to be satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Most pupils are keen to learn. Teachers and pupils get on well so that there is a good climate for learning. At times lessons are good, particularly where staff have expertise in their subjects. In the best lessons, high expectations are backed up by detailed plans and searching questions to create and maintain a high pace of work, placing stimulating demands on the pupils. However, there are too many lessons where teaching is mundane, expectations are not high enough and pupils spend too long on very ordinary tasks, so that the pace of learning slows. As a result pupils lose interest, at times showing unsettled behaviour. The few teaching assistants provide appropriate support for individual pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, enabling

them to make satisfactory progress. In all classes pupils are given targets to help them improve their work. While some teachers provide steady and constructive advice through talk or marking, this is not so for all classes, with the result that some pupils are not aware of how well they are doing or where they need to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school rates the curriculum as good but inspectors judge the range of work that pupils undertake to be satisfactory. Opportunities for making links across subjects are often missed and teachers are not yet planning consistently to deliver a creative and stimulating curriculum to promote excitement and further enjoyment in learning.

New resources and training have been provided for staff in information communication and technology (ICT), and teachers make regular use of this as an additional aid to pupils' learning. Pupils benefit from the school's organisation for the teaching of mathematics and English in 'sets' according to their ability. Initiatives to improve writing skills are beginning to impact on standards.

Pupils enjoy a good range of activities outside lessons, which include art and crafts, sports, singing, computers and cycling proficiency. Many pupils take part enthusiastically. All of these activities add significantly to pupils' experiences and help encourage an active, safe and healthy lifestyle, as well as developing good social skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school takes the care and welfare of pupils seriously and judges provision to be good but the inspection evidence shows that overall care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Statutory requirements are met for ensuring pupils' safety but staff have not had recent updated training on child protection. There is a sound personal, social and health education programme in place. Pupils are encouraged to look out and care for each other and they know whom to ask for help if they have concerns. The support for pupils' academic development is soundly planned but is not focused sufficiently to have a consistent impact. Teachers and support staff track the progress of pupils appropriately and this ensures that pupils receive more support if their progress slows down. Support for those pupils who have learning difficulties or those with behavioural issues is handled sensitively and targeted well. Individual education plans prepared by the special needs coordinator are suitably detailed but the additional targets added by class teachers are more variable and not all are effective in supporting or guiding pupils' learning. Links with the infant school and the receiving secondary school are good and help smooth transition. While generally supportive, a few parents felt that the school's systems for canvassing their views and sharing information with them are not good enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The Headteacher has successfully led the school through the transition from a middle to a junior school and is beginning to put into place systems and structures to strengthen the leadership and management of the school. Key areas for development have been correctly identified and included in the draft school development plan. However, there are too many

priorities, and the measures by which the school can judge its success are not sufficiently clear. The school was initially slow to respond to the issues raised at its last inspection. However, since the appointment of the Headteacher, better progress has been made in raising standards in English, but a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating aspects of the school's work, especially the quality of teaching and learning, is still required in order to raise teachers' expectations and improve standards. The quality of subject co-ordination is variable. Overall, it is satisfactory. Aspects of the co-ordination of mathematics are good. This to some extent accounts for the sustained above average standards in mathematics. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are now beginning to hold the school to account and have agreed an appropriate recovery plan which will ensure that the school's budget balances by the end of the 2009/10 financial year.

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Annex A

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?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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?	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.

Annex A**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	4
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	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

02 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's VC Junior School, Long Stratton, Norwich, NR15 2UY

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our visit and talking to you. We thought that you were very friendly and polite. We were very pleased to hear that you like coming to school and your attendance is above average. It was really nice to see that so many of you who were new to the school last September have settled in so well.

We believe your school is a satisfactory school and does some things well. Your headteacher and teachers work hard to make certain that you are safe and well cared for. The standards you reach in mathematics and science are above average. Well done. You have made a lot of improvements in your writing but we think you can still improve further. You certainly seem to enjoy your work in art, music and physical education and attending the after school clubs.

We also think that your school could do even more to help you. We have asked your headteacher and teachers to help you make even more progress in your work but especially in English. We believe that they can do this by checking carefully that your teachers are teaching as well as they can all the time, and that the teachers and governors are very clear about what is expected when the school is planning to bring about improvements. We also think that your teachers need to plan their lessons more carefully to make sure that your skills in English and mathematics are practised when you are being taught other subjects.

Thank you once again for helping us with the inspection.

Best wishes to all the pupils at St Mary's V.C. School.

David Wynford Jones

Lead Inspector