



St Mary's CofE (C) First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124284
Local Authority Staffordshire
Inspection number 292944
Inspection date 11 January 2007
Reporting inspector Marion Wallace

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

Type of school	First	School address	Marston Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Wheaton Aston
Age range of pupils	4-4		Stafford ST19 9PQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01785 840314
Number on roll (school)	97	Fax number	01785 841463
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Peter Timpson
		Headteacher	Sue Wesley
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's Church of England First School is smaller than the average primary school. The majority of pupils are White British and no pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is significantly lower than average. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and pupils entitled to free school meals are lower than average. Most children have attended the private Muddy Paws Nursery on the school site before they enter Reception.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of St Mary's Church of England First School is good. All who work in the school help to create a well organised and caring learning environment in which pupils thoroughly enjoy their work and learn to cooperate well with each other. Pupils are happy to be in school and most parents are positive about the school. Pupils enter school with a wide range of abilities but overall attainment on entry is average. Children in Reception experience a good curriculum and are well taught and consequently they make good progress working towards and often beyond the expected goals. Standards remain above average as pupils progress through the school and this reflects consistently good achievement. Standards have been above or well above average for the last four years; however, standards reached by more able pupils are variable. In 2006 there was a slight dip in numbers reaching the higher levels in writing. The small number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress. Additional support for these pupils is limited owing to budget constraints and work is not always closely matched to their ability. Preparation for future economic wellbeing is good, and pupils learn to become responsible members of the school and wider community. Pupils' good progress is the result of consistently good teaching. Throughout the school teachers are well organised and plan interesting lessons. Expectations of what pupils can do, and how quickly they achieve tasks, are generally challenging and ensure pupils make good gains in their learning. Teachers' planning identifies work for different ability groups but this is sometimes a limited focus especially for more able pupils. The school has good systems to check on pupils' progress and set targets. Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. They are keen to learn and respond well to interesting lessons. Relationships are good and the learning environment is safe and stimulating; consequently, pupils develop a good level of self-confidence and positive attitudes. Pupils are adopting healthy lifestyles because this aspect is well promoted. Their views are listened to carefully, for example about how they should travel to school. Care, guidance and welfare are good. 'Teachers look after us well,' said a group of older pupils. Pupils know their targets well and procedures to ensure academic progress is maintained are rigorous. Good induction procedures enable children to settle quickly into school life. The curriculum is good; specialist teaching enriches learning for pupils in music and dance. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and has identified areas for further development clearly. Governors are very experienced and supportive but also challenging in their role. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide a sharper focus to improve the match of work for different ability groups, especially the more able.
- Improve resources and deployment of staff, and the match of work, for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children in Reception build well on their prior attainment and consequently make good progress in all areas of learning because they enjoy what is offered and respond to the clear expectations. Opportunities for outside play are well planned and the outdoor area is well used to enhance learning. Children enter Year 1 with above average skills in all areas of learning. Achievement is good in Years 1 and 2. Consequently, standards in Year 2 are above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Nevertheless, more able pupils sometimes do not do as well as other ability groups. For example, in the 2006 tests, more able pupils did not do as well in reading and writing as they did in mathematics and science. Rigorous tracking of pupils' progress and good teaching are helping to maintain good standards in Years 3 and 4. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress towards their targets. They are well supported in class by their teacher and work is planned for them but in some instances there could be an even closer match of work to ability.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They learn to listen well to each other and confidently take part in discussions. Pupils respond enthusiastically to well planned opportunities for their spiritual well-being, fostered effectively through assemblies. Pupils enjoy school immensely and this is reflected in above average attendance. They consider they are well looked after and they are clear about rules and sanctions because they help to determine these. Behaviour is excellent throughout the school because expectations are consistent from the time children enter the school. Pupils are kind and courteous towards each other and show levels of maturity and responsibility beyond their years. Older pupils take care of younger pupils. They get involved in a good range of activities that benefit their overall health, such as walking to school, but have less involvement in helping shape the development of the school. 'We would like a school council,' said a group of pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Children get off to a flying start in Reception because teaching is consistently good. Throughout the school, expectations of behaviour and work achieved are high and the majority of pupils are challenged well in lessons. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively to capture pupils' interest and involve them in their learning. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, the teacher skilfully used a video snippet to show the importance of rules in every day life. This motivated the pupils and helped deepen their

understanding and awareness. Teachers use different teaching strategies well. These include 'talking partners' which are helping to improve speaking, listening and social skills. Planning usually takes good account of the different abilities of pupils, but occasionally the match of work could be sharper to ensure consistently good progress for all pupils. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils in Reception. Marking is frequent and challenges pupils to do their best and procedures to check on progress are well established.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils experience an interesting curriculum that ensures pupils enjoy their learning. All pupils benefit from specialist teaching in music and dance. Curriculum planning is detailed and generally well matched to pupils' abilities. Pupils use computers to enrich learning in other subjects and opportunities for using numeracy and literacy skills are well developed. The curriculum is enriched by visits and visitors and covers a range of interests. The range of clubs and activities is good for the size of the school and effective use is made of the hall during lunchtime; for example, the football club is well attended. Visitors and visits such as the trip to Cannock Chase and Shugborough make learning interesting for pupils. Personal, social and health education is well planned and ensures pupils know how to stay safe and be healthy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Adults have good knowledge of pupils as individuals and provide effective support and care. All information about pupils' welfare and academic development is shared comprehensively. Pupils feel safe and secure at school and parents recognise this. Induction arrangements are good and, consequently, any new pupils settle quickly and enjoy school. Support for their academic development is good and as a result pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. They enjoy reviewing their own progress and setting their own targets for improvement. There is regular and rigorous assessment of pupils' work. The information, however, is not always used effectively in some year groups to support those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are adequate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is well organised and manages the school very well on a day to day basis. There are well considered plans for the next stage of development and all staff are committed to a common sense of purpose and contribute to the good atmosphere in the school. The school improvement plan is good and reflects the school's awareness of issues to be addressed. All staff and governors contribute to the plan which is informed by a rigorous review of all aspects of the school's work. For example, an analysis of test results in mathematics led to action being taken that improved the

teaching of problem solving skills and led to improved standards. The headteacher is very good at enlisting the support of subject leaders to track and monitor the outcomes of developmental action taken and has made good use of the local authority consultants. For example, the science curriculum was recently improved through consultation with subject leaders. The strong team work is evident in the recent launch of 'assessment for learning' and 'target setting' but this is still being refined to ensure maximum consistency throughout the school. Governors are well organised and respond strategically to concerns. They have a very good view of the school's development and this allows them to play an important part in school development planning.

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	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	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	1
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	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?	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

- Dear Pupils St Mary's Church of England First School, Marston Road, Wheaton Aston, Stafford, Staffordshire, ST19 9PQ Thank you very much for welcoming us into your school. We enjoyed talking to you and your teachers, coming to your assembly and listening to your beautiful singing. These are the things we liked most about your school:
- When you first come to the school in Reception, you make a good start to your education and you do very well.
- You do well in your work because you have good teachers.
- You behave very well in lessons and break times.
- You told us enthusiastically that you like school and you feel safe and well supported. But, to make things even better we have suggested a few things we think will help:
- Ensure that your work really challenges you to do your very best, especially those of you who find your work particularly easy.
- Make sure that those of you who find your work difficult are given the extra help you need and activities that help you to do well. We enjoyed our day in your school very much and wish you well for the future.