

St Mary's CofE First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125999
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	293427
Inspection date	7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Linda Kelsey HMI

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pauline Davenport
Headteacher	V Earwicker
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2001
School address	School Lane Washington Pulborough RH20 4AP
Telephone number	01903 892401
Fax number	01903 892945

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Introduction

The school was inspected by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves a rural commuter village south of Horsham. Children come to the school from a wide local area and have few socio-economic disadvantages. The number of children with special educational needs is below average and there are no children currently claiming free school meals. There are no children learning English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school because standards are high at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 5. Pupils make excellent progress during their time at the school. These high standards and the exemplary behaviour and attitudes of pupils have been a consistent picture since the time of the last report six years ago. This is because leadership and management, teaching, the curriculum, care, welfare and guidance are all outstanding. The headteacher has promoted a very focused yet shared vision across the school that every child matters and is special in some way. The pupils know they are viewed this way so that enables them to demand the best of themselves and others. As one remarked, 'We are all special people in one way or another and all have something that we are good at'.

Pupils really enjoy school and attendance is improving. It is just above the national average and the school is working hard to encourage all families not to take holidays during term time. Pupils are well behaved, keen to do well and have very good attitudes to learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are very well cared for and encouraged to reflect on their thinking, and teachers use Christian stories to guide the pupils' moral development. Developing pupils' thinking skills has been a focus for the school and it is evident in lessons that this development has boosted pupils' confidence to discuss issues openly with their peers and teachers. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They know what constitutes a healthy diet and engage in a full range of physical activities, including regular swimming in the school's heated pool. The school has close links with neighbouring schools and with a school in Africa. Pupils' relationships with each other and with the school staff are very good. Pupils have a keen understanding of where they and their school fit into the thriving local community.

Teaching is outstanding and the quality of work on display around the school confirms this. The high standards in art mentioned at the time of the last report are still evident. Preparation is thorough and well thought through. As one parent wrote about her son in Year 5, 'The Sherlock Holmes work, which has focused on investigations, has brought to life his own research at home into his life and times.' The curriculum is outstanding and enables teaching to be exciting, real and relevant to the needs of these articulate pupils.

Leadership and management are outstanding and this view is shared by governors, staff and parents. As one parent remarked, 'A superb school – it can't be faulted.' The school's self-evaluation is robust and thorough, with a good range of supporting evidence. It is cautious in its evaluation of how good the school really is and this is because the school recognises that there is always more to do. Across the school, everyone shares the same strong commitment to further improvement through new initiatives which are pertinent to the school's needs. An impressive group of middle managers are empowered to manage their areas extremely well. This includes the management of special educational needs, which is highly effective, with good procedures to support pupils and parents.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no major weaknesses and the school has identified the correct areas for improvement in its development plan. These are to develop the role of the curriculum coordinator, narrow the gap between standards in reading and writing and work toward the application for the Investors in Health award.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and this has been a consistent picture since the last inspection. Standards are also above average by the time pupils leave school. As a result, they are well prepared for their new schools.

Pupils make excellent progress during their time in Reception Year. Many are already working at a level beyond their age. The Foundation Stage profile taken at the end of Reception Year indicates that, while the standards of the intake are average overall, they are variable and, in some years, there is a majority of more able children. The fluctuations from year to year are because cohorts of pupils are small.

Excellent progress is maintained in Years 1 to 5 because teaching is so consistently good and well planned to meet all needs. This ensures high standards are maintained throughout all classes. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make very good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they have very good attitudes to learning, enjoying the curriculum taught to them. They are keen to do well and are very positive about their time at school. As a result of their high academic standards in core skills and their positive attitude to life, pupils are very well prepared for the future. Pupils feel safe and well protected and they are well prepared to move to a new school at the end of Year 5.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding and that is why pupils make excellent progress through the school. Teachers' knowledge of their subjects is excellent and expertise is shared so that all teaching staff and their assistants are confident about their teaching. Teaching is also excellent in the Foundation Stage and this ensures pupils are very well prepared for Year 1. The members of staff share a remarkable range of skills, ensuring that the curriculum is rich, interesting and lively. Teaching is extremely well planned and based on meeting the needs of all pupils. An example of this was work around the 'Sherlock Holmes' investigation where pupils were acting as forensic scientists. When asked why they were examining white powders, they explained that these had been found at the scene of the crime and needed further investigation to see what they were.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

This area is outstanding because the topics planned motivate and engage pupils in their learning. All work is supported through a range of interesting visits outside the school and a number of specialist and expert visitors to the school. One such visit recently involved a Roman soldier visiting the school in the morning so that pupils could re-enact the life of Roman times. A very

wide range of extra-curricular activities is available and additional sporting and physical education activities ensure that pupils keep physically fit.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Arrangements for safety are all in place. Pupils feel they are well cared for and know where they can seek advice and support. There are very good arrangements for the transition of pupils to the next school and the headteacher monitors the progress of all pupils who leave the school. Assessment information is thorough and pupils' progress is tracked through the school. This ensures that all pupils' needs are met so that they make excellent progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding because there is a shared commitment from the headteacher, staff, governors and parents to continue the school's improvement. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and complimentary about the school and its leadership. There is excellent capacity for further improvement.

There is no complacency and members of staff work very hard to ensure that the curriculum is lively and relevant for the needs of all the pupils. This is the main reason why this school is so successful. The accommodation has been skilfully adapted and space is well used to ensure that there is a lively environment both inside and around the school grounds. Governors and parents enthusiastically support the school. Governors know the school well and are very well informed by the headteacher about its strengths and areas for development.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

11 June 2007

Dear Pupils

St Mary's C of E First School, Washington, West Sussex RH20 4AP

Thank you so much for welcoming me to your school recently. I enjoyed watching you at work and talking to a number of you at break and lunch and in class.

You will not be surprised to know your school is outstanding because you all achieve such high standards in all your work. Some of your art work and investigational science was amongst the best I have seen. I was particularly impressed with how very well behaved you were and how well you get on with each other. You clearly like school very much and your hard work and good attitudes are why so many of you go on to do so well in your next schools.

One of the reasons your school is so good is because it is very well led and managed by your headteacher. This has been the case for many years and she, together with the staff and governors, all work hard to make sure you receive the best education possible. They believe you are very special and this is reflected in how well they plan and teach the excellent curriculum that you all enjoy so much.

The headteacher is very enthusiastic about making sure that the school continues to improve and she has said the school needs to work on improving the teachers' job of co-ordinating subjects across the school, improving your writing so it is as good as your reading as well as making sure you become recognised as good investors in healthy lifestyles. These are the right things to develop and you can help here by continuing to work as hard as you do and making sure you are always well behaved.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Linda Kelsey HMI