

St Mary's CofE Primary School, East Grinstead

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126055
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	293450
Inspection date	11 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Eileen Chadwick

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Russell
Headteacher	Shirley G Williams
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001
School address	Windmill Lane East Grinstead RH19 2DS
Telephone number	01342 323858
Fax number	01342 300678

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

In this average sized school, the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Pupils' attainment on entry is average, although wide-ranging. Within the last year, the school has won ArtsMark Gold, Healthy Schools and Eco Awards and also holds the International Schools Award. Fairly recent staff turnover means that several existing staff are in new leadership roles.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils' personal development is outstanding. It provides pupils with a well-rounded education which enables them to successfully develop their academic, creative, practical and sporting skills. Pupils behave well and their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is excellent.

Pupils' achievement is good. Children quickly settle into school when they join Reception and make good progress, including in reading and numeracy. Good teaching in Reception soon enables children to become confident learners who really enjoy school. In Years 1 to 6, teaching and learning are good and this leads to pupils making good progress. By Year 2, standards are well above average in reading and mathematics but only average in writing. By the end of Year 6, standards are exceptionally high in reading and well above average in mathematics and remain average in writing. Throughout the school, pupils write well for a range of purposes but weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and handwriting are not always picked up so pupils' progress in writing is not as quick as in reading and mathematics. Basic writing skills are not built systematically enough, year on year. This particularly prevents lower attaining pupils in the infants and more capable pupils in the juniors doing as well in writing as they do in reading. The school is improving its science provision and pupils are now making good progress, however there is still scope for more pupils to reach higher levels by Year 6. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in information and communication technology (ICT) and their progress is excellent in art and design.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers make learning enjoyable and relevant to pupils' lives. However, the build-up of basic skills is not always steady. The very rich curriculum, particularly strong in the arts and sport, is a significant reason why pupils do well and enjoy school so much. It is enhanced through a wonderful range of extra activities and visits, including excellent international links. There is some good provision for gifted and talented pupils in the arts, sport and practical subjects but there is less effective provision for very able writers and mathematicians.

The Christian ethos of the school makes a strong impact on pupils' personal development. Pupils develop their decision making, teamwork and enterprise skills very well. They have a very secure understanding of healthy lifestyles and make an excellent contribution to the community. Pupils' very good attendance shows how much they enjoy school. Care, guidance and support are good. Pastoral care is strong, pupils feel safe and are confident they have someone to turn to if they need help. There are good systems for checking pupils' progress.

Leadership and management are good. Effective procedures for monitoring and evaluation have given school leaders a clear understanding of what needs to be done to raise achievement. Many governors are new to their roles and still receiving training for holding the school to account. They are fully aware that some procedures are insufficiently rigorous, for example the systems for ensuring parents' views can be fully taken into account. Whilst the majority of parents are completely satisfied, a minority are uncertain how to best raise issues so the school can act on these in the best interests of their children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by more rigorous teaching of spelling, handwriting and punctuation throughout the school.

- Provide more challenge for gifted and talented pupils in English and mathematics and raise standards further for more capable pupils in science by Year 6.
- Ensure governors fully develop their roles in holding the school to account and develop clear systems for communicating with parents.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' overall achievement is good. Pupils' overall attainment on entry is average and, by the time they leave the school, they reach above average standards in English and well above average standards in mathematics.

Pupils make good progress from entry to the school in Reception through to Year 2. By the time pupils begin Year 1, they have reached the standards expected and some have exceeded them. By Year 2, standards are well above average in reading and mathematics. However, from Reception to Year 2 standards in writing are only average. The proportion working at higher levels has increased considerably this year in mathematics. This is due to better checks on pupils' progress. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' progress in relation their starting points is good. Pupils make particularly good progress in reading. However, there is work to do for more capable pupils to bring their writing standards up to the same as reading. Standards in Year 6 have been significantly above average in English and mathematics for many years but only just above average in science. The school is working hard to improve pupils' investigative science skills and, in Years 3 to 5, standards are now well above average in science. However, these improvements have yet to have a full impact on standards in Year 6 for more capable pupils.

Throughout the school, pupils learn to write fluently for a wide range of purposes. However, they do not develop their spelling, punctuation and handwriting so systematically. This is preventing standards matching those in reading, including for lower attaining pupils in Year 2. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and, by Year 6, very nearly all reach the expected levels in English and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are extremely well supported by the school's Christian ethos and the vibrant curriculum. Pupils are keen to learn and say that they really enjoy being in school. They appreciate how the school takes their views into account. They say bullying is rare and that adults deal with any inappropriate behaviour quickly and fairly. Behaviour is very good in the playground and usually good during lessons but, when the pace of a lesson falls, a few pupils lose concentration. The school's ethos and high quality art and design make a substantial contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A rich cultural education arises out of an outstanding range of international links. Pupils' contribution to the school and wider community is excellent, for example, when they take responsibility for improving their environment and play a major part in welcoming linked school visitors from around the world. They build very good decision making and teamwork skills and a good awareness of the world of work and enterprise. Good progress in literacy, numeracy and ICT means pupils have a good base for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Throughout the school, good relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves create a positive learning atmosphere. Teachers use a wide variety of approaches to engage pupils' interest, and deploy ICT resources well to facilitate learning. Pupils are helped to learn through listening and watching as a complete class, as well as through individual and small group work and problem solving. However, in the relatively weaker lessons there is too little direct teaching of key skills and pupils are not shown clearly enough how they can improve their work. This is a major reason why progress is only satisfactory in writing. Skilled support staff make a good contribution to learning by working with small groups and individuals which helps pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties, to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Links between subjects are excellent and make learning meaningful and relevant to pupils' lives. The curriculum is greatly enhanced by a strong creative element which is seen in the outstanding art and design and technology work on display. The extensive range of clubs improves pupils' personal, academic, musical and sporting development. Visits, visitors to the school and residential trips provide pupils with excellent first-hand learning experiences. The curriculum is particularly strong in giving the school an international dimension. It very successfully develops pupils' keen awareness of life beyond their immediate environment, for example in Africa. In the Foundation Stage, there is a good balance between teacher-directed activities and purposeful play. The school provides regular enrichment for gifted and talented pupils in art, music and sport but the challenge in English and mathematics is inconsistent. Provision in science is being improved and is now good. Enhanced opportunities for investigative science mean the science curriculum is more relevant, challenging and balanced.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Induction into Reception is very carefully planned and ensures children are happy and settle quickly into school life. There are robust arrangements for safeguarding pupils and all requirements for health and safety are met. There are good links with outside agencies to help vulnerable pupils. Good links with the other schools ease the transfer for pupils when they change schools. Assessment procedures are thorough and regular. They are used to set individual targets for pupils. Pupils are made aware of these and can usually say what they need to do to improve. Gifted and talented pupils are identified but assessment of their progress across the range of their talents is not systematic.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is forward looking and innovative and with other school leaders has created a strong sense of purpose and ethos. Self-evaluation is accurate and has identified most of the pressing priorities. School improvement planning is good and has advanced considerably since

the last inspection. Arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching are good and recently appointed staff are well supported. Assessment procedures are rigorously analysed by senior leaders and subject managers and this process of self-evaluation is now involving other staff. The improvements since the last inspection show the school's good capacity for further improvement.

The school has recently undergone significant changes to the governing body. Governors are involved and supportive and, between them, have a good range of experience. Governors are keen to increase the way they hold the school to account and are currently receiving training. They know that systems for communicating with parents are not as clear as they could be.

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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?	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	2

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	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	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.

Annex A

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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary School, East Grinstead, RH19 2DS

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the inspection of your school. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting you, and my conversations with you were a great help in getting to know your school in a short space of time.

Firstly, you need to know you go to a good school where you make good progress. Here are some good things about your school:

- You make good progress in English and mathematics.
- You clearly enjoy school and are proud of it.
- You behave well and are kind and helpful to each other and your teachers.
- Your artwork is stunning and you have really good opportunities for ICT, music, sport and design and technology.
- You have excellent opportunities to learn about other lands and through visits, visitors and clubs.
- Teachers make sure you are well cared for and kept safe.
- Your headteacher and teachers work hard to make the school better.

This is what I am asking the school to change:

- Improve your spelling, handwriting and punctuation.
- Make sure that those of you who are particularly talented are always given challenging tasks in English and mathematics and you do as well as you can in science before you leave.
- Make sure governors play a bigger part in checking how well you are all doing and let your parents know how they can best talk to the school.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and do your best.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Eileen Chadwick Lead inspector