

St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Purton

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 126350 |
| Local Authority | Wiltshire |
| Inspection number | 293531 |
| Inspection dates | 21–22 March 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Martin Kerly |

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

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|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 351 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Vacant Position |
| Headteacher | Ian Tucker |
| Date of previous school inspection | 5 February 2001 |
| School address | College Road Purton Swindon SN5 4AR |
| Telephone number | 01793 770239 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average. It is on two sites, several hundred metres apart along a narrow road. Reception and Years 1 and 2 are in a Victorian building. Years 3 to 6 are in late 20th century buildings, including several temporary structures, on a large site adjacent to the secondary school. The pupils are almost all White British, speak English as their first language and many come from relatively advantaged families living in the large village and surrounding areas. The attainment of most children on entry to the school is close to the national average with a significant proportion of children being above average and relatively few below average. The numbers of pupils with learning difficulties, statements of special educational need and physical disabilities are smaller than average.

The school has been through a prolonged period of turbulence and uncertainty since the last inspection. The abrupt departure of the headteacher in 2004 was followed by a succession of three acting headteachers for two years. A new permanent headteacher took up post in September 2006 and a new permanent deputy headteacher began working at the school in January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has begun to improve rapidly after a period of uncertainty within the leadership and already has some strengths. The improvement is directly related to the recent appointments of the headteacher and deputy. The headteacher has made an outstanding start in addressing a number of significant and organisational weaknesses within the school. He is being exceptionally well supported by the deputy. Together they have already instigated a number of changes designed to improve standards and the quality of provision, for example by reorganising pupils in Years 3 to 6 into single age and smaller classes from January 2007. The headteacher has quickly gained a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Effective plans to address many issues are being developed and starting to be implemented, although there has been insufficient time for some of these to have made a significant difference. One of several similar comments from parents stated, 'The headteacher's strong leadership has brought a sense of cohesion and community to the school in a very short time.' Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, having stalled during the period when there was disruption to the school's leadership, but accelerated in the last six months. The school is well placed to improve further.

The achievement of pupils is satisfactory. By the end of Year 6 standards are average. Most pupils reach nationally expected levels but relatively few exceed them and some, particularly those who are more able, do not achieve as well as they should. Targets set for the number of pupils likely to exceed national expectations by the end of Year 6 remain low. Pupils' progress has been inconsistent between year groups and classes because of ongoing variations in the quality of teaching and a previous lack of overall clarity about expectations of teachers and pupils. Teaching is satisfactory. It is at least good in Reception and in Years 2 and 6. In other years, whilst satisfactory, it is more variable and often lacks the challenge and pace needed for good learning. Provision and standards in Reception are good.

Pupils' personal development is good. The care, support and guidance they receive are good. The curriculum is satisfactory. However, shortcomings in accommodation restrict the scope for the youngest children to work and play independently outdoors despite the staff's best efforts. There are similar constraints for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Overall leadership and management are satisfactory but improving rapidly. Whilst good management features are being put in place, more time is needed for these to become embedded and for them to make a substantial difference in terms of improving achievement and standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise expectations of pupils, particularly those who are more able, in order to increase their achievement and standards by the end of Year 6.
- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching in all years to reflect the good practice and role models in Reception and Years 2 and 6.
- Develop the outdoor areas in the lower school site to strengthen the curriculum and range of learning experiences, particularly for children in Reception, but also those pupils in Years 1 and 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The achievement of pupils is satisfactory and standards by the end of Year 6 are average. Children achieve well in Reception. This year a significant proportion are likely to exceed national expectations. Achievement in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory although there is some inconsistency. After a satisfactory start in Year 1 progress by pupils of all abilities currently in Year 2 has accelerated. Many of these pupils are on track to attain above average standards by the end of the year.

A legacy of previous inconsistent progress means some older pupils are not achieving their full potential. There is strong evidence that the pupils respond well to good teaching and are capable of achieving well. The progress by those currently in Year 6 has accelerated rapidly since January 2007. However, previous slower progress means some pupils, especially the more able, are unlikely to achieve as well as they should in national tests. Achievement by pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory and, in a few specific cases, is good as a result of effective support. Expectations of more able pupils have not been high enough and too few of them are expected to exceed average standards by the end of Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school. This is reflected in their good attendance and positive attitudes to learning. They behave well and are growing into confident and thoughtful young people who take their responsibilities in and around the school seriously. The good behaviour rangers and school councillors make a sound contribution to the well-being of the school community and to pupils' understanding of citizenship. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and promoted by some high quality assemblies. Pupils are involved in local cultural activities but have only a limited awareness of the cultural diversity of contemporary Britain. They are gaining the necessary key skills that, together with the opportunities to work together, ensure they are well prepared for the future. Pupils understand the benefits of both eating healthily and taking regular exercise. They feel safe in school and are confident that if any 'falling-out' occurs this will be dealt with swiftly.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are improving following the appointment of new staff and changes to the organisation of classes. In Reception children learn well through a good range of activities, particularly indoors, and teaching assistants are fully involved in guiding and assessing the children. In Years 2 and 6 teaching is consistently at least good with elements of outstanding practice. Successful features include probing questions, a brisk pace, high expectations and activities carefully matched to meet pupils' differing needs. There is some good teaching in other years but much is only satisfactory. In too many lessons lengthy introductions and whole class activities do not make allowances for pupils of different abilities. Learning by more able pupils slows when they are given tasks that are too easy. Some teachers rely too heavily on pupils volunteering ideas and this allows too many of the pupils to remain uninvolved and lose concentration. The pace of some lessons is slow with a lack of purpose and pupils are unclear

what is required or why. The time taken to move between sites to use the computer suite seriously limits the time given to learning how to use the computers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school is investigating ways of improving the inadequate outdoor areas on the cramped lower site to strengthen the curriculum for children in Reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2. Joint planning by teachers in parallel classes is helping to share expertise and ensure equality of opportunity for pupils but informal contacts between teachers in sharing curricular ideas are partially constrained by the distance between the two sites. There is good provision for pupils' personal development and several good quality initiatives are being introduced to strengthen the curriculum. These include piloting more creative ways of introducing new topics, adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of gifted and talented pupils and strengthening the use of computers across all subjects. These are helping to further increase pupils' interest. There is a satisfactory range of after-school clubs and a good range of activities beyond the classroom including visits and visitors and participation in music and sports competitions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures designed to safeguard pupils are well established and under constant review. Pupils say they feel safe in school and have an adult in whom they can confide. The provision of 'bully boxes' and ideas books in the classrooms enable them to anonymously air concerns and suggestions. The school monitors pupils' personal progress well. Social and academic achievements are celebrated. Systems for checking academic progress are good and pupils are generally familiar with their short-term targets and know what they need to do next in order to improve. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities are monitored effectively and the school works well with parents. Close links with specialist agencies ensure that pupils receive good support when the need arises. This high level of care makes a strong contribution to pupils' well-being. Good links with the secondary school ensure that pupils' transition to the next stage of education is a keenly anticipated event.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher responded quickly and resolutely to major issues he identified on his arrival. He has raised the level of professional debate by teachers and support staff, gained consensus on a number of school policies and with other senior leaders drafted a well structured improvement plan and a number of other specific plans. The new class organisation was successfully introduced in January. One of several parents to comment on this wrote, 'The changes have been handled really well and to the benefit of the children.' The headteacher already has a clear view of teaching in all classes following some effective monitoring. Other senior leaders are poised to take on a greater involvement in monitoring the work of the school. All the newly appointed members of the leadership team are good role models in their classrooms. Performance data are being collated and shared to enable better tracking of progress. Gaps in the data from previous years make it difficult to be clear about progress over time by individual pupils or whole groups. Other good quality systems to check on the school's performance are being established but have not been going long enough to identify the impact

of recent and ongoing changes. Governors fulfil their roles well. They played an important role during the recent phase of changes in the school's leadership, helping to maintain staff morale and parental confidence. They work well strategically, for example by promoting discussion and feasibility plans to create a single site school.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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 quality and standards in the Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| 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

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| 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 | 3 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |

The quality of provision

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| 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? | 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

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| 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 | 2 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 3 |
| 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 | 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 |

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making my colleagues and me feel so welcome when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing some of your work. Yours is a satisfactory school in which lots of important things are quickly improving. We are pleased to say there are several aspects that are good but there are also some things which need to get better. Here are some of the 'highlights':

- We are pleased you enjoy school so much. You behave well and are thoughtful in the way you care for one another and school.
- Most of you are making satisfactory progress in your work. Some of you have started to make really good progress.
- All your teachers plan together in teams and there are some good lessons across the school.
- The school arranges lots of interesting visits and special events for you.
- Everyone who works in the school takes good care of you and helps those of you who sometimes have problems or need extra support.
- The new headteacher has worked ever so well to introduce new ideas and improve the school, for example by changing the classes in Years 3 to 6. Other leaders are also helping him to make the school even better.

I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on three things:

- Encourage you all to do even better in your work, especially those of you who find it quite easy at times.
- Make sure all teachers use more of the good ideas and ways of teaching that are used so well by some of the teachers in your school.
- Find ways to improve the outdoor areas in the lower school to extend the range of things those of you in Reception and Years 1 and 2 can do outdoors.

We all hope you continue to enjoy your time at St Mary's. Perhaps you will have some ideas of your own about how you could make even more progress in your work.