

# St Mary's Lewisham Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100730
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lewisham
<b>Inspection number</b>	307459
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Wendy Simmons

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	260
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms E Browne
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr M Britt
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 September 2003
<b>School address</b>	329 Lewisham High Street London SE13 6NX
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8690 2613
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8690 6008

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Mary's educates a high number of pupils in a very cramped site and is currently undergoing major building works. The school serves a very mixed community that includes some areas of high social deprivation. A third of all pupils are from a Black British Caribbean background and close to a third are from Black African heritages. The next largest groups include those from mixed backgrounds and pupils from White British and Asian heritages. An exceptionally high number of pupils speak English as additional language. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties. Their difficulties largely relate to behaviour, social, emotional, speech and communication. A small number of pupils have autistic spectrum disorders, complex medical needs and physical disabilities. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is higher than in most schools. The school has the Healthy School and Activemark awards. A high number of pupils join and leave the school at unexpected times throughout the school year.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Mary's is a good school, which provides outstanding care for its pupils. The strong leadership, especially by the headteacher, senior staff and governors, is driving the school forward very well. People of many different backgrounds and cultures share in the life of the school and everyone is welcomed. The vast majority of parents have confidence in the work of the school. As one parent put it, 'The school is an extension of our family'.

The school's vision of 'Aiming high, united in faith' is fully met. This is evident in pupils' good achievement, their successful wider personal development and in their good spiritual and cultural development. The outstanding pastoral care provided for pupils contributes much to this very inclusive school. Consequently, pupils enjoy learning, grow in confidence and gain a good awareness of how to be fit and healthy. Effective teaching and learning helps most pupils to gain average standards by the end of Year 6. From children's very low starting point, this demonstrates good achievement.

Pupils do well, particularly in mathematics, science and reading. Pupils gain the skills needed to do well in their secondary education. As pupils mature they become increasingly well motivated and work successfully with others. The excellent care of pupils contributes much to their good behaviour. Despite the fact that a few pupils show challenging behaviour they are successfully helped to overcome their emotional and behavioural difficulties. As a result, this is a friendly school where pupils show respect for each other.

In the last year, there has been an important focus on writing because national tests and assessments show that standards were much too low in this aspect of English in 2007. This year, standards are on track to be much higher and the improvement reflects the impact of the school's special writing project and a good emphasis on discussion work during lessons. There is still room for further improvement as opportunities are missed for pupils to extend and edit their writing. This is because the curriculum is not flexible enough to allow this to happen. Higher ability pupils are not skilled enough in writing complex sentences or confident enough to write at length independently.

Following the last inspection, when standards were exceptionally low, the school fell into decline and many aspects of its work were inadequate. Since then, the headteacher and a new assistant headteacher joined the school. Together with a transformed and effective governing body and the additional assistant headteacher they have worked very hard to arrest the decline in standards by strengthening and improving the quality of teaching. In the last three years, standards, pupils' behaviour and their enjoyment of school have all improved well. The school's good track record of improvement since the last inspection demonstrates that it has a strong capacity to continue what the headteacher calls, 'The journey to becoming better still'.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

When children join the school in the Nursery, their skills and knowledge are exceptionally low. Many find it hard to work alongside other children and talk about their ideas. Children make steady progress and standards are beginning to improve. However, standards remain much lower than usually expected by the end of the Foundation Stage. This is a barrier for raising whole school attainment still further. In the last year, children's social and emotional development has improved well and is now close to that expected for their age. Achievement

is also better and children are now making satisfactory rates of progress. However, the staff are not providing enough opportunities for children to read and write and this slows their progress in language and communication. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them is too low. Teaching and learning are largely satisfactory but there is still more to do to ensure that teachers make learning as meaningful and exciting as possible. The accommodation is too small. This has a negative effect on children's physical development and hinders the way adults can work with small groups. Building works are well under way to improve the internal space, but the outside space will still be very cramped, which limits opportunities for the pupils develop their physical skills and to explore space and the world around them.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve achievement in the Foundation Stage and provide more opportunities for children to read and write and gain better physical skills and knowledge of the world around them.
- Provide more opportunities for all pupils to edit and extend their writing, including helping higher ability pupils to use sentences that are more complex.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Children make steady progress in the Nursery and Reception classes but standards are much lower than expected by the end of the Foundation Stage. Since 2006, standards have improved considerably in Key Stage 1, lifting them from an exceptionally low level to become closer to average. Overall, pupils make good progress between Years 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.

By the end of Year 6, standards are average in mathematics, science and reading. The sample of work seen, lessons and assessment information confirm that standards in writing are on track to be higher in 2008 than they were in 2007. In 2007, a low proportion, only a quarter of all pupils, gained the level expected for their age in writing. Currently, three quarters of all Year 6 pupils are on course to reach the level expected for their age (Level 4) and the school has increased the proportion that are on track to gain the higher Level 5.

Achievement is especially good for pupils who speak English as an additional language and for those from Black Caribbean and Black African heritages. As a result, they perform better than is usually found nationally for these groups. Boys and girls perform similarly in mathematics and science. Teachers are now helping boys to do better than they did in English last year. The performance of White British pupils is likely to lift considerably in 2008, due to the focus on English.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Attendance has improved very well from below average to become above average in recent years. The rigorous focus by leaders helped the pupils and their parents to understand why regular attendance is so important. Pupils have a strong sense of self-belief and show pride in their work and achievements. Pupils enjoy many cultural festivals and have a good knowledge of different faiths. Their knowledge of Christian beliefs is strong. Pupils enjoy school and love the clubs and the specialist teaching of sports, which aids their skills and fitness. Pupils are proud to have won the Lewisham Football Cup and get much out of the morning 'Wake and Shake' sessions. They eat healthily and run the healthy tuck shop, which the vast majority use

regularly. Pupils know about how to be safe. They enthusiastically work for the community. For example, they proudly read poetry to Archbishop Desmond Tutu when he was opening a new building at the local hospital. Pupils are gaining the basic skills needed to do well in the future and are also learning good enterprise skills by selling their own superb religious art prints at Lewisham market.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers manage pupils well and relationships are good. As a result, pupils behave well, concentrate, listen and work hard from Years 1 to 6. Teachers place a strong emphasis on helping pupils to talk about their views and use new vocabulary, which helps pupils to express themselves with greater clarity. Lessons are thoroughly planned and activities are mostly organised well to meet the pupils' wide ranging needs. However, higher ability pupils are not always helped enough to use complex sentences when writing. Activities are enjoyable, as evident when children were thrilled to write about a shadow in Year 1. The staff value pupils' work, efforts, and offer the right level of challenge in most lessons. As one pupil said, 'My teacher helps me to learn maths by giving me tough questions and I like that'. Some teachers tend to talk for too long at the beginning of lessons, which limits the time available for pupils' individual work, particularly their extended and independent writing.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

Visits, residential activities and clubs help pupils to develop their academic and personal skills well. The curriculum for mathematics and science places a strong emphasis on investigation work, which contributes much to pupils' good achievement. The writing curriculum is improving. For example, time has been increased for discussion activities. This is important as it helps pupils to explore ideas before writing them down. Sometimes, learning about writing is fragmented because teachers are sticking too rigidly to their weekly plans. As a result, pupils just get into a piece of writing when teachers stop that work and start something new. This means that pupils do not have sufficient time to edit, extend and improve their work from one day to the next. Pupils love music and would like to do more. The school has rightly identified the Foundation Stage curriculum as a focus for development as there too few opportunities for the children to read and write as often as possible, gain the best possible physical skills and, learn more about the world around them.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

The highly effective work by the learning mentor and inclusion manager ensures that pupils can get quick help when needed. Those with behaviour problems are very well supported to find strategies to overcome their difficulties without disrupting the learning of others. Pupils who have been excluded from other schools and vulnerable pupils are integrated well. There is exemplary support, care and resources for pupils with medical needs. Pupils learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties benefit from good support. In addition, the high quality resources and a carefully modified curriculum help them to achieve well. The special multi-sensory room aids pupils' spiritual development, sense of calm and

emotional development. Pupils agree that if any bullying or racist incidents occur, they know that they can get quick and effective help. Pupils know their targets well because teachers give clear guidance about how to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leaders are focused very well on pupils' academic and personal development. The school's evaluation of itself is good and clear plans are in place to improve the school still further. Notably, the much needed development of the accommodation is well underway. Middle managers are developing their roles well. Although, due to a very restricted budget, their monitoring of lessons is underdeveloped. Governors provide outstanding support. They know the school very well and have taken very firm action to strengthen the teaching since the last inspection. This has been successful in improving the care provided for pupils, as well as the teaching and achievement of different groups of learners. The school has set challenging and achievable targets to raise standards. As one parent put it, 'The headteacher is moving the school forward with clear direction'.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	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

04 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Lewisham Church of England Primary School, London, SE13 6NX

You may remember that three school inspectors came to your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly. I am writing to let you know what we found out.

Your school is a good school. This means that it does many things well for all of you and there are only a few things to do to make it even better. We are very pleased by the way that the school has improved since inspectors last visited your school. We agree with you that the school is a happy and very caring place to be. The way that all of the adults look after you and do their best for you is outstanding. This means that you are happy at school, make good progress and grow in confidence. Your teachers help you to learn new things well. As a result, you are working at the level that we expect by the time you get to Year 6. Well done for working hard to behave well, as we know that some of you find this difficult sometimes. You enjoy coming to school. We would like to congratulate you on improving your attendance, please keep this up. We like the mathematics, science and reading activities and agree with you that there are a good range of clubs and visits. Your writing is improving well but there is still more to do. We are very pleased to find out how well you are talking about your ideas and feelings in lessons.

The adults, especially your headteacher, are working very well to keep improving things for you. I have asked them all to:

- help children in the Foundation Stage to read and write as often as possible, do more physical activities and find out more about the world around them
- help you to look carefully at your writing so that you can make alterations that will make your work even better; especially, helping some of you to write more interesting and complex sentences.

We hope that the art sales at Lewisham market continue to go well, as this is an excellent project.

Yours faithfully

Wendy Simmons

Lead Inspector