

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Barnsley

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106631
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	309184
Inspection dates	24–25 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Rodger

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	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Nixon
Headteacher	Mr Craig Lee
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2001
School address	Stocks Lane Barnsley South Yorkshire S75 2DF
Telephone number	01226 206422
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school serving an area with broadly typical social and economic circumstances. A very small proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage with a very small number of pupils from minority ethnic heritages. A before-school club is available on site but this is not managed by the school.

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 with some outstanding features. In the past year the new headteacher has very effectively led the school to make rapid improvements. In particular, the central focus on improving teaching to raise standards is reaping rewards. Improving the achievement of pupils throughout Key Stage 2 has led to significantly above average results in the 2007 national tests. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior staff have worked hard and with tremendous commitment to ensure pupils' success lies at the heart of their vision for improvement. As a result, pupils make good progress. Parental comments support this judgement, such as, 'We have noticed a massive improvement in his work which we have put down to a very good teacher,' and, 'We think the parents' assemblies are great as it allows us to see what is happening in each year group. I feel proud of the work children show us'. Parents recognise that their children achieve their potential well and develop into enthusiastic and confident individuals with positive attitudes to school and learning.

At the heart of pupils' improved achievement, particularly in Key Stage 2, is the rigorous tracking of their progress at an individual and class level. Additional activities led by a well-trained team of teaching assistants ensure that any pupils at risk of underachieving catch up quickly. Teaching is good and, at times, outstanding. It is less strong in the Foundation Stage, where children make satisfactory progress from starting points that are broadly in line with expectations. Planning here is not always clear about how children's development is to be promoted and expectations of their personal development are not consistently high enough. Throughout the school, vibrant classroom displays provide a wealth of information to assist pupils' learning. In Years 1 to 6, lessons are carefully planned and pupils are fully involved in their learning because of the clarity of explanations and teachers sharing what is expected of them. This is a strong feature in the teaching of writing which has been a recent priority. Good improvements to resources for information and communication technology (ICT), reading and the new outdoor equipment and games are having an obvious and significant impact on pupils' enjoyment. As they said, 'We enjoy the woodland trails and science garden'. Older pupils really enjoy the many 'fun' activities there are, such as 'hymn gym' and the ICT games to promote the learning of basic literacy and numeracy skills so it is 'not dull or boring in our lessons'. The good curriculum is developing well since the introduction of a 'themed' approach. This is fostering enjoyment. Planned links between subjects give pupils opportunities to practise and apply their good basic skills. However, pupils are not consistently encouraged to maintain the high quality of presentation that they are beginning to show in their writing lessons.

Pupils' good personal development and well-being are reflected very well in their outstanding understanding of healthy lifestyles. Pupils sell healthy snacks and vividly described their healthy lunchtime foods. Playtime safety and care for each other have improved because of the 'buddy' bench and the 'friendship stop' introduced recently. Pupils described in detail the improvements to behaviour in the playground. Behaviour in lessons is generally good. Participating in musical and drama performances in the community helps to equip pupils well for later life and future learning because they develop into confident and articulate young people. Pupils are well cared for and their safety is of prime importance. There are effective systems in place to ensure pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has very accurately identified the relative strengths and weaknesses in the school and set a very clear path to improvement. He has ensured an effective leadership team supports the strong team of hardworking and talented

staff. Revised and improved management structures have been put into place, so that all are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Governors are well informed and provide carefully targeted support. As a result of the very effective changes, including the very strong tracking and target-setting systems, the school is improving at a good rate. It has made good improvement since the last inspection. However, the much increased rate of improvement in the past year shows it to have an outstanding capacity to improve further. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress from skills that are broadly in line with national expectations when they start school. By the time they start in Year 1 they are reaching standards in line with national expectations in all areas of learning apart from personal, social and emotional development, which is below what is expected. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Children enjoy the indoor and outdoor activities, especially being able to choose what they do, although there is a lack of planning for this aspect of learning. At times there is a lack of challenge and what children are expected to learn is unclear in early literacy activities. Games are used effectively to promote good mathematical learning and children enjoy them very much. Sometimes children are not discouraged from shouting out and the expectations to learn to sit and listen are not always reinforced. Parents are well prepared for their children's start in school through home visits and those children in nearby nurseries are visited by school staff to ensure a smooth transition between home and school. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Sound procedures to assess progress towards the early learning goals include frequent observational assessments.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching in the Foundation Stage and place greater attention on planning what children are to learn in order to improve their progress, especially in personal, social and emotional development.
- Raise expectations of the quality of pupils' presentation of work in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well overall and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. The results of the most recent Year 6 national tests show that pupils have made marked improvements, especially in writing. This rapid improvement, following three years of underachievement, is a result of the well-directed efforts of the new leadership team and the impact this is having on improving the quality of teaching. The school met its challenging targets and standards are rising. New strategies to improve writing are having a significant impact in giving pupils the skills and confidence to present their work well in different styles. However, pupils do not always apply this learning when they are writing in other subjects. Key Stage 1 pupils reach above average standards in national tests and their achievement is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and the small number of pupils from minority ethnic heritages achieve well as a result of the well focused support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils take responsibility for their actions and develop well in a climate that values their contribution. Attendance is above average, reflecting pupils' outstanding enjoyment and enthusiasm for school. Behaviour around school is generally good and most pupils are quiet and listen attentively in lessons. Pupils willingly rise to the challenge of their responsibilities showing pride and confidence. The school council, for example, enables pupils to gather and share the views of many and make decisions that contribute to school improvement. Pupils know how important it is to have a healthy lifestyle and take great pleasure in eating healthily. They show immense enjoyment in all the many sporting and other activities that promote a healthy lifestyle. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The pupils ensure that they live out the clearly expressed values promoted in school in their day-to-day conduct. Pupils have confidence to express their views and they forge good relationships.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good and pupils learn well overall. Teachers are confident and their good subject knowledge and use of resources mean that pupils are often very effectively challenged and encouraged to improve their work. Good support provided by teaching assistants helps pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress. Lessons are well planned and take account of the full range of abilities with appropriate levels of challenge for more able pupils. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn and they explain this well to pupils. Key vocabulary is highlighted and pupils move smoothly from one activity to another. Lessons are lively and enjoyable because questioning is probing and pupils' answers are valued. Pupils work cooperatively to assess their learning and are skilled in knowing what success criteria they need to refer to, to enable them to check this. Pupils' work is marked meticulously and gives very clear pointers to the pupils to improve. This is having a strong impact on improving the content of writing throughout the school. However, teachers do not ensure that pupils apply their learning by consistently reinforcing high expectations of presentation in other work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides an effective balance between teaching specific literacy and numeracy skills based on national programmes and pupils' opportunities to apply these skills through relevant and interesting tasks that link subjects together. Long and medium term planning in Years 1 to 6 ensures that pupils' skills are built on progressively year on year. Senior leaders have provided time for teachers to plan together which strengthens the quality of the curriculum provided. At the same time, pupils are given positive opportunities to participate in creative activities that enhance their enjoyment of learning. Pupils praise the good range of visits and clubs that enrich the curriculum. Those for promoting healthy lifestyles are particularly strong. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils effectively. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well by teaching assistants. One to one support for reluctant pupils has a positive impact on their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good quality care, guidance and support provided for pupils ensure they are well cared for, feel safe and are happy in school. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils and for child protection meet requirements. Steps to ensure the safety of pupils on visits are checked through the risk assessments. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported. Links with external agencies are made and provide a welcome, additional level of support for a few pupils. New arrangements to track the progress of individual pupils and class groups are exemplary, although the full impact of this information on improving achievement has not yet been realised. Pupils and their parents are well informed of pupils' learning targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Everyone has high aspirations as a result of the headteacher's clear vision to raise standards and improve achievement in the school. The headteacher has quickly and effectively enabled staff to share his high aspirations for pupils. The rigorous systems for tracking and analysing pupils' progress and the impressive target-setting that results are outstanding features. There is a clear recognition that pupils learn best when they are enjoying themselves and the fact that pupils find the school such a happy and fun place to be is evidence of the successful promotion of these aspects. Teamwork is strong and involves everyone, whether they are leading lunchtime clubs or delivering training to staff. Coaching is used successfully to promote greater consistency in the quality of teaching. The school is well resourced since the recent purchase of laptops and new reading material for Key Stage 1 and the library. The headteacher's monitoring and analysis have been rigorous and searching. As a result, the school's self-evaluation has accurately identified the relative strengths and weaknesses. The actions taken by the school are very well targeted and have had a good impact in bringing about school improvement. Some new strategies are at an early stage of implementation and their full potential has not yet been achieved. Governors are well informed through the wide range of training courses they attend and the detailed reports provided by the headteacher. They support the school well.

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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	1

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Barnsley, S75 2DF

Thank you all for making the inspectors' visit to your school so enjoyable. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing all the wonderful things you have done in school recently. We have judged your school to be good with some outstanding features. Your enjoyment of everything you do, your hard work and the way you all understand the importance of keeping healthy are impressive.

The results of the tests taken at the end of Year 6 last year are a great improvement on previous years. Your writing is so much better now you have learned so many new ways of writing stories, reports, poems and descriptions. You say you enjoy learning in school and we agree that teaching is good and the use of whiteboards to show video clips or photographs makes learning so much more interesting. The 37 competitions you have the chance to take part in throughout the year mean you are busy after school too. No wonder you are so fit and healthy.

Everyone who works in school wants you all to do your best in everything you do. They all work very hard and you know what a difference this is making to your fun and enjoyment.

Your school has been asked to improve some things and you can help with this too. Please take as much care with your presentation of all your writing as you do in your 'Big Write' lessons. Sometimes, the youngest children in school do not listen and call out too much. They need help to settle and learn to make their own choices.

Thank you all again and enjoy the rest of the term.