

# St Mary's CofE Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109212
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bath and North East Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	309929
<b>Inspection date</b>	8 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Carnaghan

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 controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	84
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Stephen Birchall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Jane Shepherd
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 September 2003
<b>School address</b>	Old Road Writhlington Radstock BA3 3NG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01761 434548
<b>Fax number</b>	01761 435091

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<b>Age group</b>	4-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Mary's is a small primary school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Almost all pupils are White British. Because of difficulties in appointing a permanent headteacher, an acting headteacher is leading and managing the school.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

St Mary's School provides a satisfactory standard of education. The current acting headteacher plays a significant role in the school. Since taking up her post late in 2007, she has identified key areas for improvement, particularly standards in Key Stage 2. With good support from the staff, she has acted swiftly. The actions taken have raised standards so that they are currently broadly average. Pupils' achievement, including those with learning difficulties, is now satisfactory. The Foundation Stage is satisfactory and prepares children well for their later school careers.

Parents are generally supportive of the school. A few are concerned over the temporary leadership arrangements but most compliment the efforts of the acting headteacher and staff to help their children develop and learn. One typical response was, 'We have found the school excellent, friendly with a positive outlook and our child is making progress far beyond our expectations.' Pupils feel safe and free from harassment, and know that rare bullying incidents are dealt with well. The 'worry box' for posting concerns gives pupils easy access to personal support. Their personal development is good. Behaviour is also good, much better than at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' welfare is a high priority and pupils recognise that there is always a friendly face to turn to if they need care or help.

Teaching is satisfactory. Pupils are engaged by their lessons and classrooms are well managed. This promotes satisfactory learning. Resources are used well and teaching assistants support those with learning difficulties effectively. However, some lessons are not challenging enough for the more able pupils and their pace can be too slow. Marking is often good and proffers suitable advice. However, pupils do not receive regular, simple targets to assist them to understand the next steps in their learning. As a result, care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The curriculum is good. It is well planned to meet pupils' needs and interests.

The acting headteacher plays a key role in the school's satisfactory leadership and management. She quickly established improved expectations amongst the staff and acted to raise achievement. Staff have stepped up to support her and work well as a team but currently lack the skills needed to act independently, although training to address this is under way. Governors support the school strongly and have enacted plans to set the school leadership on a permanent footing. However, they do not monitor the school independently and this limits their ability to offer consistent challenge or help set long-term goals. The school has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection and, with its recent track record, its capacity for improvement in the future is also satisfactory.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Children enter the school with skills that are similar to those usually found, but slightly below expectations in language and number skills. Staff care for and support the children well, relationships are good and behaviour is calm and controlled. Children are well prepared for Year 1 and standards are broadly average by the end of the Foundation Stage. Teaching is satisfactory. Learning is often heavily directed by the teacher and there are too few opportunities for children to make personal choices. The provision is well managed. However, the outside area is small and does not have the space for children to play with large toys.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the school's leadership is placed on a permanent footing as soon as possible to enable more effective planning for the future.
- Improve teaching so that it provides greater challenge and pace to promote better learning.
- Set simple, short-term and individualised targets for pupils so that they know what they should do to improve their work.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Current standards in Year 6 are above average. Small classes throughout the school mean that attainment varies year by year but, overall, standards by the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly average. Analysis of the progress of individual pupils from their various starting points indicates that the achievement of pupils, including those with learning difficulties, is satisfactory.

The current leadership has started to tackle the low achievement that was evident from the 2007 national test results. In particular, the school has successfully improved some aspects of teaching, for example by introducing a more systematic way of linking sounds and letters to support reading and by developing more opportunities for the oldest pupils to undertake investigative work in science. These changes are having a positive impact on standards and have improved achievement across the school.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils behave well, the school having successfully resolved problems identified at the previous inspection. Relationships across the school are good and pupils say their teachers are helpful and friendly. Pupils have a strong sense of what is right and wrong, demonstrating good personal and social skills.

Attendance is broadly average and pupils clearly enjoy their education in a calm and well ordered environment. They understand how to live healthy lifestyles, knowing how to eat healthily and to keep fit. Pupils make a good contribution to the community through the lively and active school council and by their regular fund raising for many different charities, such as collecting glasses for Africa and for sports relief.

Pupils' moral and social development is good. Their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils show limited understanding of living in a multi-faith and culturally diverse Britain. Pupils' acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills to help them in the future is satisfactory and pupils are adequately prepared for the next stages of their learning.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Regular monitoring ensures that teaching and learning are consistent. Pupils enjoy lessons, saying teachers make them interesting and fun. Pupils are well managed, ensuring good

behaviour. Classrooms are quiet and purposeful, pupils are keen to learn and relate well to one another and their teachers. Lessons provide clear learning objectives and teachers revisit them in the closing moments to assess pupils' progress.

Teachers' marking is careful and often provides clear, friendly advice to which pupils respond both in writing and by improving their work. Teaching assistants work cooperatively with teachers, supporting pupils with the greatest need. The school is well resourced and teachers use these resources to enliven learning, for example a range of musical instruments provided a practical and lively demonstration of pitch in a Year 6 science lesson. The school has good assessment information but teachers do not always use this to promote the best learning.

In some lessons, teachers do not maintain a good pace, so pupils' concentration falters and learning is less effective. Lesson plans do not always take into account the range of abilities in the mixed-age classes. This means that, while those with learning difficulties are well supported by teaching assistants, more able pupils are not always kept at full stretch.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is well planned to provide thorough coverage and includes opportunities for all Key Stage 2 pupils to study French. Pupils are enthused by what they study and speak warmly about the opportunities for sport, both during and after school. These sessions are enhanced by a range of visiting specialist coaches. Personal, social and health education is thoroughly planned and enhances pupils' personal development well.

There are numerous before and after-school activities of all kinds and pupils attend in large numbers. The curriculum is further enriched by links with a Caribbean partner school, by many visitors and good opportunities for educational visits.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

One element in pupils' undoubted enjoyment of school is that they feel safe and well cared for. They turn unhesitatingly to staff, confident that they will be listened to and receive the support and guidance they need. Those with learning difficulties are well supported, enabling them to achieve as well as their peers. Arrangements to ensure pupils' safety are robust. Pupils appreciate that the school has moved to a fairer system of discipline that rewards pupils as much as it reprimands them.

The school does not set clear enough targets to help pupils improve their work. Those that exist are too numerous and complex for pupils to comprehend or to have a positive impact on achievement.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The acting headteacher provides clear direction for the school, which has led to recent improvements. She has been quick to identify key areas to improve in order to raise standards and achievement.

The school does not set challenging enough targets to help raise everyone's expectations. The current arrangements for monitoring and evaluation by the headteacher and staff are beginning

to have an effect on the school, particularly on teaching, but do not focus enough upon improving pupils' learning outcomes. Self-evaluation procedures are satisfactory and the acting headteacher has a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school development plan includes a wide range of relevant initiatives, for example, in improving the role and leadership of middle leaders, but these have not had time to have had a significant impact.

Governors give consistent support to the school and have made exacting decisions to secure permanent leadership for the school. They receive good information from the headteacher on the school's performance. However, they have rightly identified that their role in monitoring the school lacks independence and therefore does not offer sufficient challenge.

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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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	3
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	3

### The quality of provision

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

<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>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	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

9 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's School, Writhlington, Radstock, BA3 3NG

The inspectors would like to thank you for your help during our recent inspection visit. St Mary's School provides you with a satisfactory education.

It was good to hear how much you enjoy school. The inspectors noticed that behaviour has improved a lot since the last inspection and your personal development is good. You told us how well you are cared for and we agree that the school treats you well and listens carefully to your views. It should give you clearer advice about how you could improve your work. The care, guidance and support you receive are satisfactory.

Your standards of work are similar to other children's across the country and your achievement is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory. You work hard and get on well with your teachers and other pupils, so your learning is satisfactory. Many of you said how you enjoy lessons but the inspectors think some teaching can be slow and, at times, more able pupils need more challenging work to do. The range of topics and areas you study are good and interesting and many of you said how much you enjoy the sporting and other clubs that take place after school.

- As you know, there have been some changes of headteacher recently. The current acting headteacher has made some good improvements to the school and has helped to improve your achievement, but the school would work better if leadership was made permanent. We have asked the school to look at three main areas to improve the school further.
- It should appoint a permanent headteacher as soon as possible.
- Teaching should ensure that all lessons are pacy and challenging.
- You should be given clearer simpler targets to help you improve your work. You can help in this by asking for advice about your work when you need to.

Once again, many thanks for all you help. It was a pleasure to meet you.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan Lead inspector