

St Marychurch Church of England Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113473
Local Authority	Torbay
Inspection number	311286
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Rowena Onions

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	309
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Lashbrooke
Headteacher	Paul Woodhouse
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Hartop Road St Marychurch Torquay TQ1 4QH
Telephone number	01803 329070
Fax number	01803 312891

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average size primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British origin and most speak English as their first language. A small number have English as an additional language but none is in the very early stages of learning English. The school serves an area with pockets of significant economic and social deprivation. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, and a larger than average number have statements of special educational need. Attainment on entry to the Nursery and Reception classes is below expectations. The school has a Primary Basic Skills Quality Mark and Healthy Schools and Sport England Active Mark awards. The school has been through a period of disrupted staffing, with several changes amongst senior staff, and has only very recently regained stability in this respect.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Marychurch is a satisfactory but improving school. Some aspects of the school are good, including provision in the Foundation Stage, the personal development of the pupils and the care that the staff take of them. The pupils are highly valued and every effort is made to ensure that they thrive in the warm Christian ethos that the headteacher has very successfully established. Parents value this, making comments such as 'the ethos has really brought out the best in my children'.

The progress made by children in the Foundation Stage is good and most are on course to meet the standards expected in most aspects of their learning. Progress in English and mathematics in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory and improvements are coming through in terms of the proportion of pupils who are attaining standards appropriate to their age. However, higher attaining pupils are not making the progress they should because they are not always sufficiently challenged in lessons. Lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from well-targeted support and make good progress.

Pupils are happy and report enjoying school. Much of the teaching in the school is good and teaching is consistently good in some classes. Adults manage pupils well and good relationships mean that lessons take place in an atmosphere that helps pupils learn. The very good skills of the teaching assistants are used well to support learning and to provide valuable additional help for individuals and groups. However, there is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching, for example in the way pupils are challenged and the amount of work they complete in a lesson. This makes teaching satisfactory overall. There are good examples of detailed, helpful marking in some classes, but this is not yet consistent through the school. Basic skills in English and mathematics are taught systematically but pupils do not have enough opportunity to revisit and consolidate them over a period of time. Opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects are also limited.

The curriculum enables pupils to gain good personal skills to help keep themselves happy, safe and well. High expectations of behaviour are evident and the vast majority of pupils live up to these. Pupils work and play happily together, and show a developing awareness of how they can support each other, for example as a 'buddy' to a friend experiencing difficulties. Pupils have good opportunities to be part of the local community through links with the church and activities such as participation in a recent community concert.

The headteacher has successfully brought together a new and enthusiastic team of staff who are self-critical and analytical of the work of the school. Subject leaders are working alongside the senior leadership team in the successful development of teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science. The improvement work they have undertaken is paying dividends in increased pupil progress. A significant development is the detailed tracking of pupils. This has enabled staff to identify which pupils are not making good progress towards attaining expected standards. This information has been used to set challenging targets and plan interventions that are promoting better progress. Work to extend this strategy to higher attaining pupils has begun, but has yet to have the same positive impact. The school works well in partnership with others in order to ensure the personal safety of the pupils, to broaden the curriculum and to promote better achievement. Governors are very supportive of the school and ensure that their statutory duties are fulfilled.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children receive a very positive start to their education in the Nursery class. The strong teaching that children get creates positive attitudes to school; this helps them to settle quickly and learn well. Good leadership has supported development work that leads to children making accelerated progress in Reception. Most children attain expected standards by the end of Reception. Writing, however, remains below expectations because children do not have sufficient opportunity to practise the skills they have learned. A good curriculum and good teaching allow both Nursery and Reception children to benefit from working in the classrooms and in the outdoor area, with adults and on their own. This active, motivating programme of work helps them learn well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in English, mathematics and science by:
- enabling higher attaining pupils to make the progress of which they are capable
- ensuring that all teaching is consistently of the best quality
- providing more opportunities for pupils to practise the skills they have learned in their English and mathematics lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In Year 2 and Year 6, standards in writing, mathematics and science remain a little below average but have improved from those attained in 2007. Standards in reading are average. Although achievement is satisfactory overall, there are groups of pupils who are making good progress, linked to the good teaching they receive. This is particularly true in the Foundation Stage and in some classes in Years 2, 5 and 6. Senior staff are using detailed tracking of pupils' progress to identify where progress is less good and are using this information to plan, with increasing success, interventions such as small group teaching. This is particularly beneficial to lower attaining pupils and those with English as an additional language, who make good progress. It is not yet having the same impact on the progress of higher attainers, the progress of whom is rightly a matter of concern to a small minority of parents.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are open, friendly and polite. They like school and are particularly enthusiastic about lessons that require them to be active participants. Their enthusiasm is demonstrated by the high number that attend voluntary activities. Pupils are developing well personally. They know the value of exercise and healthy eating, even if some do admit to taking less notice of the latter than they know they should! They report feeling safe and secure in school. Pupils are learning to be good citizens and they support each other well. Older pupils take care of younger ones by, for example, sitting with them at lunchtime. Through the school council, pupils learn about the democratic process. Although they have good knowledge of their own cultural traditions, pupils are unable to talk with the same confidence about the variety of cultural traditions in the United Kingdom. Improved skills in English, mathematics and information and

communication technology are preparing pupils better for future economic well-being, but current standards mean this is only a satisfactory aspect of personal development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers are working hard to improve the impact of their teaching. There is now consistently good teaching in some classes, but not yet in others. A number of new strategies have been introduced to strengthen teaching, with increasing success. Teachers are now using strategies such as encouraging pupils to talk to each other to clarify their thinking, and an increased amount of practical work, to try to ensure that lessons are interesting and motivating. However, there are occasions when teachers talk for too long at the beginning of a lesson and this reduces learning. As one pupil commented, 'If I'm bored, I don't try as hard'. Although activities provide the correct level of challenge for most pupils, in some classes teachers do not expect enough of higher attaining pupils, restricting their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There are aspects of the curriculum that are good. Provision to promote pupils' personal development, through personal, social and health education, is strong and effective. Enthusiasm for sport is enhanced by the use of subject specialists. Pupils' experience and interest are broadened through the judicious use of visits and visitors. The local area is used well in subjects such as science and geography to make learning more relevant. Pupils are enjoying the recently introduced opportunity to learn French. There is now systematically planned teaching of skills in English and mathematics.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Adults take great care to ensure pupils' personal well-being and safety. Pupils who have additional learning needs or are particularly troubled are supported very well. Very good partnerships with other agencies help promote this. The school has good systems for tracking pupils' progress and the targets set are appropriately challenging. Pupils know their targets and, as they get older, are increasingly aware of how to use them to help improve their work. However, in some classes, marking is not as helpful as it might be in helping pupils to understand how to improve. There are very thorough systems for ensuring that children settle well into school, and appropriate links with secondary schools mean that pupils approach transfer confidently.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The newly formed leadership team, in close partnership with the local authority, has begun to be successful in promoting change and improvement. As a result, pupils are making increased progress. Steps already taken, and rising standards, demonstrate that the school has secure capacity to improve further. Subject leaders are using checks on the school's work appropriately

to plan improvement work. School self-evaluation is honest and accurate and has ensured that improvement work has been correctly prioritised to have the greatest impact on the greatest number of pupils. The school acknowledges that there is now a need to use data and monitoring to ensure that all groups of pupils are making at least good progress. Governors are extending their role, from one of providing valued support, to a more robust approach that also holds the school to account for the impact that work is having on pupils' achievements.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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	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	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?	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

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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

6 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Marychurch C of E Primary School, Torquay, TR1 4QH

- We really enjoyed our visit to your school and would like to thank you for the friendly way in which you talked to us. We think that your school is a satisfactory one that is getting better all the time. This letter is to tell you what we found.
- Children in Nursery and Reception get off to a good start.
- In Years 1 to 6 you are making satisfactory but improving progress in your work.
- Some of you who are quick to learn could make faster progress.
- You like your school and find it a safe and secure place to be.
- The adults in the school take very good care of you.
- You learn to help each other and to behave well.
- You get on well with your teachers and mostly try hard in class.
- The way you are taught in some lessons is more successful than it is in others.
- You do not always get enough chance to practise what you have learned in your English and mathematics lessons.
- Staff and governors are working hard to make your school better.

We have asked your headteacher and teachers to do three things to help make your school better.

- Help all of you make the best progress that you can.
- Make sure that all lessons help you to learn well.
- Plan lots of opportunities for you to practise what you have learned in English and mathematics lessons in other subjects.

We are very glad that you like your school and enjoy all the activities in which you get involved. We think that you could help to make your school even better by suggesting, through your school council, what helps you to learn best in lessons and what is not so helpful.

Best wishes

Rowena Onions Lead inspector