

West Moors, St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113780
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311370
Inspection date	12 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Diane Wilkinson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Dixon
Headteacher	Mary Anne Pike
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2003
School address	240 Station Road West Moors Ferndown BH22 0JF
Telephone number	01202 874838
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary's accepts pupils from the village of West Moors and the surrounding area. Most pupils are of White British backgrounds and none is at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, although it varies considerably between year groups. The school holds the Healthy School Award.

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 and improving school with strengths in all areas of its work. A significant strength is the partnership between staff, governors, parents and pupils, which ensures that all are working towards a common goal. They are committed to raising standards and ensuring that all pupils are included well in school life. A major reason for this shared aim is the school's very effective consultation with parents and pupils. As the chair of governors commented, 'they have a sense of ownership of the school'. The result is that the vast majority of parents are confident in the school's work and pupils much enjoy school, like their teachers, and work hard in lessons. Many parents share the views of one who wrote, 'My children love school and are very keen to learn – a great start to their education'. Leadership and management at all levels are good. The headteacher's leadership is very strong and she is the leading force behind school improvement. Another important strength is the school's good quality self-evaluation. The school has an impressive range of effective systems in place to analyse and evaluate performance in all aspects of school life. This ensures the school accurately identifies weaknesses and puts in place effective strategies to address them resulting in rising standards and pupils' good achievement. The school is fully aware of the continual need to improve the quality of learning and is working hard to do so. Its capacity to improve is good. The quality of provision from the Foundation Stage onwards is good. A well-designed curriculum meets individual pupils' needs and effective intervention programmes help pupils who are slow to improve. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school and the effective focus on ensuring pupils are aware of how they can succeed in their work has positive benefits on learning. The well qualified and hard working teaching assistants support pupils well, especially those with learning needs. Activities to help improve boys' progress are successfully helping to raise standards. However, not all staff ensure that boys are fully involved in whole-class sessions, which limits their progress. Care, support and guidance are good. Pupils know they are well cared for and feel safe in school. They receive good guidance in both their academic and personal development. As a result of this effective provision, pupils' achievement is good by the time they leave the school. Those pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as their peers. There is some variation in standards from year to year because of the differing proportion of pupils who have specific needs in each year group, but by the end of their final year, standards are above average. By the end of Reception, standards are similar to those expected. In Years 1 and 2 standards are rising although in the 2007 national tests for Year 2 pupils they remained close to average owing to the higher number of pupils with specific learning needs. However, more pupils reached the higher Level 3 than was seen nationally. By Year 4, standards are above those expected for pupils of this age. Pupils' personal development is also good. Pupils enthusiastically take part in lessons and behave well. However, attendance is slightly below average owing to parents taking holidays in term times. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthy and safe lifestyles and they play an important part in school life. For example, the interesting range of playground games is as a result of the school council's work. The school recognises that pupils, especially in Years 3 and 4 would increase their learning skills by being given more opportunities to work independently.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in both their academic and personal development. The good curriculum provides well-planned activities, which enthuse and motivate children and help them to do well. Staff have a good understanding of how children learn and make effective links between different areas of learning to ensure good progress. For example, children were counting the number of animals they used in their water play. Teaching is good, with well-qualified teaching assistants supporting group work especially well. Staff are skilled at prompting and questioning to help children understand, regularly setting new challenges throughout lessons so good progress is made. Good attention is paid to children's welfare. In particular, the effective induction procedures help children to settle in well and adopt positive attitudes to school life. Provision is well managed jointly by the headteacher and special educational needs coordinator who are giving effective support to the new Reception teacher.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that in whole-class activities all staff fully involve boys in discussions or answering questions so they make good progress throughout lessons.
- Encourage pupils, particularly in Years 3 and 4, to take more responsibility for planning and carrying out their own work to help increase their independent learning skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards on entry to Reception vary year by year but are generally slightly below those expected for the children's age. This is partly because of the above average number of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also because some boys have underdeveloped social and language skills. Children make good progress during their time in the school and leave with standards that are above average. The majority reach the standards expected by the time they move into Year 1. Over the past two years standards in Years 1 and 2 have been rising. In particular, boys are now making much better progress and the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 in the 2007 national tests rose well on the previous year. Standards remained close to average owing to the above average proportion of pupils with specific learning needs. The progress made by Year 1 pupils indicates standards are likely to continue to rise. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 make good progress and by Year 4 standards in English, mathematics and science are above expectations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

From the time they start in Reception pupils make good progress in their personal development. They much enjoy their time in school and say learning is fun. Good moral and social development results in pupils' hard work and good behaviour. They are friendly and polite and work well together. Playtimes are happy and harmonious occasions. Regular opportunities to take part in sport and the effective programme for personal, social and health education ensure pupils recognise the importance of healthy eating and exercise. In the safe and caring environment pupils feel secure and recognise how they can keep safe. Pupils make a very positive contribution to the school community as a playground monitor or a member of the school council and are prepared well for future life. For example, Year 4 pupils are interviewed for their role as monitor.

They also interviewed applicants for new teaching posts, with their views being taken into account. However, the school recognises that pupils need to undertake more independent work. Pupils are involved well in the life of the local community and effective links with the local church support their good spiritual development. Cultural development, including a knowledge of different cultures, is good although pupils have less understanding about the cultural diversity in Britain.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There is a consistency of approach across the school, which is benefiting pupils' learning. A common lesson format ensures that activities are well planned to meet the needs of different groups. Pupils are made very clear about what they need to do to succeed. Whole-class activities are interesting because teachers are skilled at using resources, including the interactive whiteboards, to enthuse pupils and help them understand. Class discussions are generally well managed with pupils using 'talking partners' to sound out their ideas. However, not all teachers ensure that boys are fully involved in these sessions, which limits their progress. Group work is well organised with teaching assistants successfully deployed to support learning, particularly for those who find it difficult. Pupils are interested in what they are doing. Most respond well to their teachers and work hard throughout lessons, although occasionally some sit and mark time, which is not always noticed by adults. The school has recognised that pupils, particularly those in Years 3 and 4, do not always have enough opportunities to work independently and is taking steps to improve this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school works hard to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those with particular talents. An effective range of special programmes helps slower learners to catch up. Planning for the mixed age classes is good. The creative curriculum developed over the past two years provides activities which motivate pupils including the boys. However, the school recognises that links between subjects are not strong enough to ensure greater coherence in the curriculum. Information and communication technology is a strength with effective activities and good resources supporting good teaching. The successful personal, social and health education programme ensures pupils' good personal development. Very good links with other schools and agencies and an effective range of school clubs, visitors and visits, including a residential visit for Year 4, enhance learning and encourage pupils' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Marking is thorough and very helpful, showing pupils how well they have done, where improvements are needed, and how to make them. Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully with effective targets set for improvement, although not enough reference is made to these in lessons. There is good support from within school and through outside agencies for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language. Effective systems are in place to ensure good behaviour throughout the school. Despite the

school's discouragement of absence for family holidays, this has yet to have a positive impact on attendance levels. The school complies with all statutory requirements regarding health and safety and child protection. Thorough staff vetting procedures and rigorous risk assessments help ensure that pupils are well cared for in a safe environment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is a very strong leader who has created an effective team of staff and governors who are working well together to move the school forward. Very good consultation with pupils and parents ensures they have a shared sense of commitment so that the whole school community is determined to work towards a school where all pupils can do their very best. Although staff changes and lengthy absences have slowed the implementation of some developments, the school has improved well since its last inspection. Self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate, and the information is used effectively to address weaknesses and improve achievement as is seen in the increasing number of high achievers and boys' good progress. The school is not complacent and recognises there are still areas where both the quality of provision and pupils' achievement can be improved further. Teaching is monitored particularly well, a procedure carried out by all subject leaders who are increasingly playing an effective role in school development. The appointment of a new deputy headteacher has also increased the school's capacity to drive improvement forward. Governors are very supportive and well informed. They play an invaluable and effective role in school monitoring and development and resources are used very wisely to benefit pupils' education.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	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	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	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	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

- 13 September 2007 Dear Pupils Inspection of West Moors, St Mary's CE First School, Ferndown, BH22 0JF Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you in lessons. You were very friendly and helpful. We agree with you and many of your parents that St Mary's is a good school. This is what we thought was good about the school
- We were especially impressed by the way the whole school community, your headteacher, staff, governors and you and your parents, are working well together to help your school get even better.
- Your headteacher leads the school very well. Both she and the staff and governors are good at finding out how well your school is doing and planning things that will help it to improve.
- Teaching is good and you have lots of interesting activities. Staff look after you well and give you good advice on how you can improve your work.
- You make good progress and by the time pupils leave their standards are higher than those of most pupils of their age.
- You enjoy school a lot and work hard. Your behaviour is good, you get on well with each other and are good at being monitors or school council members. What we have asked your school to do now
- Make sure that boys are always encouraged to join in discussions and have a chance to answer questions. You can help by always trying to take part.
- Encourage you more to plan and carry out your own activities, particularly when you are in Years 3 and 4. Thank you again for all your help and good luck for the future. Yours faithfully
D Wilkinson Lead inspector

Annex B

13 September 2007



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This is what we thought was good about the school

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- Your headteacher leads the school very well. Both she and the staff and governors are good at finding out how well your school is doing and planning things that will help it to improve.
- Teaching is good and you have lots of interesting activities. Staff look after you well and give you good advice on how you can improve your work.
- You make good progress and by the time pupils leave their standards are higher than those of most pupils of their age.
- You enjoy school a lot and work hard. Your behaviour is good, you get on well with each other and are good at being monitors or school council members.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Make sure that boys are always encouraged to join in discussions and have a chance to answer questions. You can help by always trying to take part.
- Encourage you more to plan and carry out your own activities, particularly when you are in Years 3 and 4.

Thank you again for all your help and good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

D Wilkinson
Lead inspector