

# St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114553
<b>Local Authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	311644
<b>Inspection date</b>	23 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sheila Browning

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	119
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Bryce
<b>Headteacher</b>	Pam Edwards
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 May 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	High Street Hartfield TN7 4AA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01892 770221
<b>Fax number</b>	01892 770221

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: determining whether the achievement of pupils is good throughout the school, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage, in English, mathematics, science and in information and communication technology; establishing whether pupils' personal development is a strength of the school and the effectiveness of actions taken by leadership and management to secure improvement. Evidence was gathered from the school's data on pupils' progress, lesson observations, analysis of pupils' work, and discussions with staff, pupils and a governor. Further analysis was gathered from the analysis of responses to the parents' questionnaire and school documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessment of these areas, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Almost all pupils in this smaller than average size school come from White British backgrounds. Children's attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), though broadly average, varies significantly from year to year. The school has a higher than average number of pupils with a statement of educational needs. Pupil numbers fluctuate especially in Years 3 to 6, with some pupils transferring to private education.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some outstanding aspects. Pupils say they 'like everything and really enjoy school'. As pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development is outstanding, it is not surprising that their behaviour is exemplary. They are a real credit to the school. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. The school council has secured new playground equipment and is involved in fundraising for charities such as Starfish Malawi. They are exceptionally well involved in the local community, and especially with the church. The vast majority of parents value the school's work; they are encouraged to come in and support their child's learning and be involved in school development. Comments such as, 'Pupils look out for each other as a result of the Christian ethos and input of the school' and 'I especially appreciate the pastoral care' are typical. The good care and welfare of the children are at the heart of everything that the school does. Safeguarding procedures are robust.

The good leadership qualities of the headteacher, supported by a strong leadership team, have been central to embedding accurate self-evaluation processes, resulting in well-chosen priorities for improvement. Governance is exceptional. Governors monitor lessons weekly, have an in-depth knowledge of the school's work and challenge the school robustly. Like the senior leaders, they are very aware of the importance of community cohesion and work hard to promote this. Together with the headteacher and staff, they are focused on change for improvement.

There are good systems for keeping an eye on pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy and pupils know and check their targets in these subjects. This, combined with well-focused teaching, has helped pupils to learn at a faster rate in these subjects than in the past. Pupils' progress in other subjects is not rigorously measured because checking systems are not in place. The focus on raising the achievement of more able pupils has successfully led to more of them reaching higher levels. Teachers are better informed about the standards pupils should meet. Consequently, the pupils now reach higher standards in response to the more challenging learning targets that are set. Any underachievement is quickly identified and pupils who require extra help or need further challenge receive it quickly. Pupils with statements of special educational needs are supported effectively and subsequently achieve well. Pupils' reading skills have improved because the teaching of letter sounds and blends is good in literacy and pupils have regular 'guided reading' sessions. As their reading skills have improved, so has their writing especially in literacy. They benefit from good opportunities for creative writing in literacy and through 'learning journeys', which combine learning through several subjects throughout the school. Close monitoring by the headteacher identified the need to boost teachers' confidence in teaching mathematics and for more practically based learning opportunities in science. She has ensured well-directed ongoing staff training in these areas. Staff development is also extended through teamwork and the school's good links with local schools and the local authority.

Children join the Reception Year with skills broadly in line with those expected for their age and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils' achievement is good. The school's most recent results successfully build on an improving trend. Ongoing improvement is seen in pupils' literacy, numeracy, scientific and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. The shared success in raising standards and improving pupils' achievement shows the school's good capacity for further improvement. Good teaching is evident throughout the school. Marking generally gives good guidance to pupils on how to improve their work, particularly in literacy work. This has been a key factor in improving standards. Lessons are well

planned and tasks carefully matched to pupils' abilities. Teaching makes good use of questioning to check pupils' understanding and resources such as ICT to support learning. In a Year 5/6 literacy lesson, pupils used laptops well to research important features of written communication and pursued their 'crime-solving' activities in a buzz of activity. To motivate and stimulate their learning, an area of their classroom was transformed into the make-believe study of Sherlock Holmes.

The curriculum provides other exciting learning opportunities, especially through 'learning journeys'. As one parent commented, 'The learning journey form of teaching inspires the children. They learn so much without realising. They are excited, inspired and eager to learn more.' As a result of a well-planned curriculum, the school has a basic skills Quality Mark, Activemark and Artsmark Gold awards. Evidence of a more creative approach to learning that provides first-hand stimulus for writing was seen, however the rigorous attention given to pupils' writing skills seen in literacy is not embedded across the school in other subjects. 'Turrets and Tiaras' enabled pupils to really find a treasure box, research about princesses, learn first-hand how to be a squire and visit Bodiam Castle. On return, they corresponded with a visiting 'knight', held a banquet and watched live birds of prey. This led to some exciting learning, writing and development of skills and understanding across a range of subjects. The curriculum is also enriched by many extra-curricular activities and school trips, including residential study weeks.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Last year, children exceeded national standards in most areas of learning by the end of the EYFS. This was due to improvements in the curriculum and the strong emphasis on improving children's language, literacy, writing and calculation skills. Children currently are already making good progress in most areas of learning. They have settled quickly because staff understand their learning needs and treat them as individuals. Consequently, their personal, social and emotional development is increasing daily. Good leadership and management have ensured thoughtful stimulating experiences that promote positive attitudes and enjoyment for learning. Much talk and excitement ensued when children found 'buried treasure' numbers in the sand which they could not wait to collect and count.

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

- Ensure that the good attention given to pupils' writing skills seen in literacy is extended throughout other subjects in the school.
- Extend the good systems for keeping track of pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy to other subjects to check that pupils are all making the best possible progress.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## 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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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



## Annex B

### Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary the Virgin CofE Primary School, Hartfield TN7 4AA

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently to see how well you were doing. We enjoyed finding out about your school and talking with some of you. We found out that you go to a good school. That means that it does some things well, but could also improve aspects of its work.

Here are some important things about your school:

- Your behaviour and attitudes to school and your personal development are outstanding. You really get on well together.
- You make good progress, especially in your reading, writing, mathematics, science and ICT.
- The curriculum is good. You told us how much you enjoyed the 'learning journeys' and all the extra clubs, activities and school visits offered.
- The headteacher, governors and staff are all working hard to help you to do your very best.
- The school takes good care of you. It is safe and you know so much about how to lead safe and healthy lifestyles.
- You are exceptionally well involved in the village, church, and local and wider communities. Well done!

Here are two things the school has been asked to improve:

- Make sure that the good writing and learning opportunities you have in literacy are extended throughout the school.
- Put in place good systems to check you progress in all subjects.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and by checking with your teachers how well you are doing in all your subjects.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Browning Lead Inspector