

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

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115161
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311860
Inspection date	4 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Best

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	383
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Denise Russen
Headteacher	Mr Chris Beazeley
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2003
School address	Hall Lane Shenfield Brentwood CM15 9AL
Telephone number	01277 221249
Fax number	01277 264316

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	4 February 2008
Inspection number	311860

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- pupils' achievement in writing
- how well pupils work independently and take responsibility for improving their work
- how effectively the school promotes pupils' all-round academic and personal development.

Evidence was gathered from observing lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's documentation and discussions with pupils, parents, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. It draws pupils from mainly privately owned homes in Shenfield. Most children are White British and the proportion from other backgrounds speaking English as an additional language is below the national average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is very low. There are more boys than girls in the school and some year groups have a high proportion of boys. The number of pupils joining the school other than at the start of Reception is lower than in other schools.

Although the number of pupils in the school with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average, the proportion of those with statements of special educational need, is nearly twice the national average.

The headteacher took up his post at the start of the term.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Mary's is a happy, thriving and high-achieving school. Standards at the end of Year 6 are exceptionally high and pupils make excellent progress as they move through the school. The school is right to evaluate its overall effectiveness as outstanding. One parent's comment, 'The school's doing a great job', reflects the sentiments and support of the vast majority. Through regular, rigorous checks and meticulous evaluation, staff and governors have a very accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. High expectations among the whole school community leave no room for complacency in any area of the school's work. As a result, the school has maintained and further improved the high standards reported at the time of the last inspection. Excellent use of financial and other resources supports pupils' high achievement.

When they start in Reception, children's skills and experiences exceed those expected for their age. Children get off to a flying start because of the outstanding provision made for them. They continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1, reaching exceptionally high standards at the end of Year 2. Standards in reading and writing are particularly strong, reflecting pupils' wide vocabulary and confidence in speaking. In mathematics, the emphasis on practical problems provides pupils with very secure foundations for their future learning. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. Pupils achieve well in this key stage from already high starting points because they maintain their good progress. Pupils' results in mathematics are especially strong. In English, pupils' results in reading are higher than in writing. Pupils' comprehension skills are particularly well-developed and, although their writing is of good quality, pupils do not have sufficient experience of writing for a wider range of purposes across the curriculum to reach standards comparable with those they achieve in reading.

In both key stages, there is little difference between the standards and achievement of boys compared with girls. All pupils from different ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to others. More able pupils progress well because they are challenged appropriately and motivated to respond. At both key stages, the improvements in the school's results since the last inspection have outpaced national trends.

There are many factors contributing to this outstanding performance. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school: 'I love it here', says one young learner, 'because I've got so many friends, the teachers give us really interesting work and the lunches are great.' Pupils' attendance is high. Their behaviour in and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are very well aware of how to keep safe. They support each other exceptionally well and show great respect for different viewpoints. Pupils' understanding of a healthy lifestyle is very well developed and they enthusiastically take part in a wide range of sporting activities. Through the school council, pupils take an active part in the running of the school, including exploring ways in which the school can become 'greener' by saving paper and recycling. Pupils regularly participate in church services, and support charities and local events. Their maturity, confidence and positive attitudes, together with high quality skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), prepare them extremely well for the next stage of their education. Pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a tribute to the school's outstanding quality of care, support and guidance. Safeguarding arrangements are well established and systems for risk assessments are robust. High-quality tracking systems enable staff to monitor pupils' progress closely and provide support promptly. The quality of provision for pupils with

additional learning needs is excellent. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are expertly supported by staff and through excellent links with parents, other schools and specialist advisers. A comprehensive register of pupils with particular skills and talents includes the targets agreed between teachers, pupils and parents.

The impact of teaching on learning is outstanding. Staff share a wealth of experience and regularly update and extend their knowledge through professional development. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Pupils respond very well to the high expectations of their behaviour and effort. They readily answer questions, follow instructions carefully and contribute well to discussions. Lessons move at good pace and pupils are well aware of what they are learning. Working on their own or in small groups, pupils settle down to work quickly and sustain their concentration. However, they do not always have sufficient opportunities to initiate and follow through their own ideas. Teachers carefully plan for pupils who learn at different rates and, in most lessons, this is suitably challenging. Teaching assistants and volunteers play a much-valued role in supporting pupils. Pupils' work is regularly marked. Most pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve and work hard to achieve this but occasionally teachers identify too many targets for improvement.

The school provides a good range of curricular and other opportunities for pupils, including a wide range of extra-curricular activities in sport and the arts. Staff have rightly identified that pupils do not have enough opportunities to systematically apply and develop skills gained in one subject in others areas of the curriculum. A start has been made but practice is not yet consistent throughout the school.

The headteacher is settling in well and is rapidly gaining the respect and confidence of pupils and parents. He is well supported by a highly effective leadership team and perceptive governing body. Subject managers have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and non-teaching staff provide first-class support. With these strengths, and the fresh perspective of the new headteacher, the school's capacity for further improvement is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Excellent links with pre-school providers help children to quickly settle into the day-to-day routines in the Reception class and provide staff with an accurate picture of each child's skills and experiences. This is particularly helpful in identifying children who need extra support and this is provided promptly, making good use of expert advice and resources. Children are keen and ready to learn, and staff provide a very comprehensive range of activities to motivate and engage these enthusiastic learners. A very good balance between adult-led and child-chosen activities successfully supports the development of children's independence within a carefully structured setting. The high quality teaching stems from regular and accurate checks on what children know and can do. Staff make first-class use of questions to help children explore and deepen their knowledge and understanding. The Foundation Stage is very well led and managed. Staff work closely with their colleagues in Key Stage 1 to ensure children's smooth transition to the next stage of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities for pupils to systematically develop and apply their thinking, problem-solving, research, creative and other learning skills across the curriculum.
- Develop pupils' writing for a wider range of purposes in English and in other subjects throughout Key Stage 2.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
--	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

5 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Shenfield CM15 9AL

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I visited your school on Monday. I very much enjoyed hearing about all the exciting things you do at school. I am delighted to hear how much you enjoy school and I can understand why. Your behaviour is excellent and you really care for each other. You have a very good understanding of healthy living and I enjoyed having lunch with members of the school council who told me how you are all involved in helping to make the school even better.

Thank you, too, for telling me about the work you were doing when I visited your classrooms and for showing me your work - I was very impressed by what I saw. You try very hard and achieve really high standards. You get on very well with the staff and they want you to do as well as you possibly can. That's why they look after you so very well and work hard to make your lessons interesting and challenging.

St Mary's is an outstanding school and you are absolutely right to be proud of it. You are very well prepared for when you move on to your next schools. I hope you will continue to work hard and produce more of your excellent work. I have asked Mr Beazeley and the staff to help you in this by doing two things in particular.

- Find ways of helping you use your many skills - such as thinking, solving problems and finding out information - in all the different subjects you study.
- Give those of you in Years 3 to 6 more opportunities to write in different ways and for different purposes both in English and in other subjects.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Best

Lead inspector