

St Mary's Church of England VA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115700
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	312036
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Alison Grainger

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	280
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Martin
Headteacher	Steven Etherington
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	St Mary's Road Tetbury GL8 8BW
Telephone number	01666 502275
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school draws most of its pupils from the town of Tetbury, although a small number travel from further afield. Pupils come from a broad range of social and economic backgrounds. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. When children start in the Reception Year, most have the skills expected for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It promotes good personal development and well-being. As one parent commented, 'Both of my children have very positive attitudes to school. They thoroughly enjoy their day and appreciate why good behaviour is important'. Almost all pupils behave well, enjoy school a lot and have good relationships with each other and with the adults in school. Pupils say that they feel safe at school and that they have an adult to turn to should the need arise. This is not surprising as pastoral care is good. Parents also value the approachability of all the staff. One reflected the views of many when she observed that 'the school staff are exceptionally welcoming and friendly'.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are close to average at the end of Year 6. Children get off to a secure start in the Reception Year, where some good features to the provision are starting to raise standards. Pupils make adequate progress overall from the start of Year 1 to the end of Year 6. However, progress is slower in writing, and is only just acceptable in Years 3 to 6. The school has rightly identified the need not only to speed up pupils' progress in writing but also to increase the number of pupils reaching the higher levels for their age in all subjects.

The satisfactory teaching and curriculum are the main factors influencing pupils' progress. There are some good features to both but also important areas requiring improvement. Lessons are conducted in a calm and supportive atmosphere and pupils are usually provided with clear instructions. The range of extra-curricular activities, such as clubs, as well as visits out of school and visitors who come into school, enrich learning well. One parent said, 'There are always so many activities going on – from orchestra, dance and Latin to the fantastic allotments'. Pupils have the chance to grow their own vegetables, contributing to their good awareness of the importance of eating healthily. Extra-curricular sporting activities, as well as physical education lessons, help pupils to keep fit. Pupils are proud that the school has the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards.

Teaching does not promote a better than adequate rate of progress overall because it is not always closely enough matched to pupils' different needs. It is also the case that teachers' expectations of the standards all pupils are capable of attaining are not always high enough. Another factor preventing pupils from doing better is that academic guidance is less effective than the attention to pupils' personal welfare, thus reducing care, guidance and support to satisfactory overall. Although pupils are set individual targets and know what these are, there is inconsistency in how well teachers use them to help pupils improve their performance. Most work is marked regularly but this is not done in a way that consistently tells pupils what they are doing well and what could be improved.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and the school runs smoothly. Self-evaluation is adequate overall, with the right key areas for development identified. There is commitment to improvement, and recent developments, such as in the provision for Reception children, show that the school has the necessary capacity to move forward. However, the contribution of teaching and the curriculum to pupils' progress is not monitored and evaluated with the rigour that is necessary to identify and rectify weaknesses really swiftly.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Good care for children helps them to settle well. One parent said, 'My daughter loves school. She has been made to feel a real part of the school community'. Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory, although improving. Developments in the teaching of sounds and letters are helping children to make good strides this year in their early reading and writing. Personal, social and emotional development is also promoted well. Most children are making satisfactory progress and are on course to reach the standards expected at the end of the Reception Year. Some are likely to exceed these standards in communication, language and literacy, and personal development. Initiatives such as team teaching and development of the outdoor area are supporting children's learning more effectively than at the last inspection. Planning is now satisfactory and takes account of the steps children need to take towards the end-of-year goals. However, what children are expected to learn from each activity is not always specified clearly and there are times when this results in children not being challenged well enough.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in writing, and help more pupils to reach the higher levels in all subjects.
- Ensure that teaching is consistently well matched to all pupils' needs and that teachers' expectations of pupils are always high enough.
- Provide all pupils with clear guidance through targets and marking to help them to improve their performance.
- More rigorously evaluate the influence of teaching and the curriculum on pupils' progress so that improvements are made swiftly when required.

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

Children make steady progress in the Reception Year. As a result of initiatives this school year, they are now making good gains in their communication, language and literacy skills as well as in their personal, social and emotional development. Progress is satisfactory across the other areas of learning. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2, where the teaching of sounds and letters is also having a beneficial effect. Standards are better now in writing in Year 2 than they were last year when they were too low.

Whilst the overall gains pupils are making between the start of Year 3 to the end of Year 6 are now acceptable, there has been underachievement in the past. There are some year groups in which standards are below average, particularly in writing, and few pupils reach the higher levels for their age in any subject. The school recognises that pupils' progress needs to accelerate, particularly in writing, if the legacy of past underachievement is to be completely eradicated and if standards are to be raised. Across the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress at a similar rate to others in their classes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as demonstrated in their positive attitudes, good behaviour and relationships with others. Pupils particularly enjoy being with their friends at school and appreciate the wide range of activities additional to lessons. They like the adults in school and feel comfortable approaching them. A relatively less well developed area, although satisfactory, is pupils' understanding of modern multi-ethnic society.

Older pupils have a good sense of responsibility and pupils make a strong contribution to the school and wider community. Pupils are proud of their efforts to raise funds for charities locally, nationally and internationally. They diligently undertake responsibilities, for example through the school council and as 'peer mediators' or 'playground buddies' who contribute to the maintenance of good relationships. Pupils' basic skills, combined with their good personal attributes, prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of education and their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Lessons are well organised. In all classes, good relationships between teachers and pupils are supportive of learning. Instructions are clear and expectations of behaviour are high. As a result, no time is lost as pupils move, for example, between whole-class sessions when they sit on the carpet to individual or group activities at tables. There are examples of good teaching, for instance in sounds and letters sessions in the Reception Year, and in the teaching of English and mathematics in one Year 5 class. The good teaching is characterised by high expectations, a good pace to the lesson and effective questioning to check and develop pupils' understanding.

There is not enough good teaching and there is quite a lot that is only just acceptable, particularly in the teaching of writing. The main reason why teaching is not more effective is that activities and the content of whole-class sessions are not always sufficiently varied to match the needs of all the pupils in the class. Expectations of the standards all pupils are capable of attaining are not consistently high enough. Sometimes, there are missed opportunities to demonstrate writing, for example to show how a scene is set at the start of a story. Teaching is maintaining an acceptable rate of progress overall but is not accelerating it to become good.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum promotes satisfactory progress in English, mathematics, science and other subjects. Short 'speed maths' sessions at the start of the school day help to improve basic numeracy skills. Pupils settle to these activities well and enjoy the challenges presented by them. Pupils are given a satisfactory range of opportunities for writing but these are not varied well enough for pupils of differing ability. There is not enough to challenge the more able pupils in writing and more generally. In some classes, there is reasonable promotion of writing in subjects such as geography and history, but this is not consistent. The school also recognises that, while it is increasing its attention to basic skills in mathematics lessons, even more needs to be done to develop these skills across the curriculum.

In the Reception Year, the right balance is achieved between activities that are led by adults and those that children select for themselves from a range provided. Activities additional to lessons contribute much to pupils' personal development and well-being, broadening their experiences and developing skills such as in teamwork. The programme of personal, social and health education contributes a good deal to pupils' awareness of how to make sensible lifestyle choices.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school carefully monitors pupils' personal welfare and is effective in promoting good behaviour. As one parent commented, 'The school puts a strong emphasis on crediting good behaviour'. Pupils feel that they are valued and that they matter. This is reflected in the comment of one pupil who said, 'I like coming to school because teachers are kind and helpful'. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are included well. Arrangements for ensuring pupils are safeguarded are secure.

The quality of academic guidance is inconsistent and only just adequate. There are examples of good provision in this area, for example in one Year 5 class where marking is thorough and comments relate to targets so that pupils are clear about what they need to do next. However, marking and targets are not used consistently or well enough to tell pupils what they are already doing well and how to improve their performance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management ensure that the school is a calm and orderly environment in which pupils feel safe and valued. There is a strong and effective focus on pupils' personal development and well-being. Since the last inspection, leadership of the provision for Reception children has improved and, as a result, children experience a better quality of education when they start school. Recent initiatives, such as in the teaching of sounds and letters and a sharper focus on basic skills in mathematics lessons, are having a beneficial effect on pupils' progress. There is a tangible enthusiasm from the subject leaders who are involved in implementing such initiatives. These recent developments show that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Staff and governors know, for example, that provision for writing and challenge for the more able pupils are important areas for improvement now. Leadership and management are promoting a satisfactory rate of improvement. However, there is not sufficiently rigorous analysis of the impact of what the school does on pupils' progress in each class and year group to bring about a swifter pace of improvement.

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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 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	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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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?	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?	3

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	2
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

13 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's C of E Primary School, Tetbury GL8 8BW

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and finding out about your school. Almost all of you enjoy school a lot and are well behaved and polite. You told us that you feel safe at school and that the adults are kind and look after you well.

You know a lot about how to keep fit and healthy. You do a good deal to help other people. You are conscientious in carrying out responsibilities in school and you told us how much you do to raise funds for charities.

You have a lot of activities in addition to your daily lessons. You are very lucky to have two opportunities to go on residential visits in Years 4 and 6. You also have a wide range of clubs, visits and visitors.

Your school is providing you with a satisfactory education. We found that the teaching and activities in lessons help you to make satisfactory progress overall during your time in the school. There are some things that the school needs to do to make your education better. In particular, we found that the school needs to help you to do better in writing and give more challenges to those of you who learn quickly.

There are the things that we have asked the school to do:

- Speed up your progress in writing and help those of you who can reach high levels in your work to get there.
- Make sure that teaching is always at the right level for each of you in the class and that it helps you to do your best.
- Give you clear advice on what you are already doing well and on how you can make your work better.
- Check up really thoroughly on how well the school is helping you to learn so that changes can be made quickly when necessary.

You can help by continuing to behave well and by always doing your best.

Yours sincerely

Alison Grainger Lead Inspector

13 March 2008

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