

St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Rickmansworth

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117447
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312618
Inspection date	19 June 2008
Reporting inspector	David Wynford-Jones

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	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Colin Bayley
Headteacher	Mrs Wendy C Awbery
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2005
School address	Stockers Farm Road Rickmansworth Hertfordshire WD3 1NY
Telephone number	01923 776529
Fax number	01923 777303

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The Inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage, the curriculum and the level of care, guidance and support in improving pupils' achievement and raising standards. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, sampling of pupils' work and discussions with them, the staff and the chair of governors together with the scrutiny of school documentation. 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 in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is a similar size to most of its type. Overall, the socio-economic circumstances are favourable. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. The school serves a mixed residential area. Nearly all the pupils are of White British heritage. Very few are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below average. The school holds the Active Sports Mark Award.

The head teacher retires at the end of the summer term 2008. A successor has been appointed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school is correct in its self-evaluation that it is a good school that provides pupils with a good quality of education. Pupils achieve well and by the end of Year 6 they generally attain above average standards. Their personal development is outstanding.

Pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Their attendance is well above average and this has improved since the last inspection. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they are keen to take part in lessons. Pupils have an outstanding understanding of the importance of being healthy and make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. Members of the school council are keen to talk about their part in raising funds for the purchase of materials to construct a bird-hide and playground equipment, to sponsor an operation to restore the hearing of a child in Africa and to support local and national charities. Pupils have an excellent understanding of being safe and fully appreciate the potential dangers presented by strangers. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Parents are very pleased with the school. One wrote, 'My children are all happy, well looked after and educated.' This sentiment was echoed by many.

Attainment on entry to the part-time Nursery is in line with national expectations. Children make good progress in the Nursery and in the Reception class. By the time they start in Year 1, their attainment is above expectations. They continue to make good progress as they move through the school. By the end of Year 6, standards are typically above average and sometimes exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. In the years where standards are not quite as high, there are more pupils in the year group who find learning difficult. Nevertheless all pupils, including those who find learning difficult, make good progress. Their achievement is good. This is because teaching is good. All pupils receive effective support from the efficient teaching assistants. In 2007, standards in the Year 6 national tests were exceptionally high in mathematics and above average in English and science. Reading is a strength throughout the school but standards in writing are more variable. However, following careful scrutiny of the 2007 national test results, effective measures have been taken to raise standards in writing. As a result, pupils have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve their work and their progress is now more consistent.

The curriculum is good overall. It is enhanced effectively by a good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors to the school. The extra-curricular activities and the annual extended visit to North Wales contribute much to the pupils' personal development. Pupils' cultural understanding is good. It is developed well through theme days and topics on different countries. Music plays a significant part in the life of the school and contributes well to pupils' cultural development. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge and skills creatively across the full range of subjects.

The school provides a good level of care, guidance and support. All health and safety procedures are rigorous. The school complies with the latest government requirements on safeguarding pupils. The vast majority of pupils know their targets in English, mathematics and science and receive sound guidance as to how to achieve them. There are many good examples of developmental marking in the English books but it is not as sharp in some other subjects. Teachers assess pupils' performance accurately and use this information well to plan future work. The school has recently introduced an electronic system for recording and analysing

attainment and progress. However, its potential to support the identification of areas for improvement has still to be explored and used effectively by all members of staff.

Leadership and management at all levels are good. The headteacher provides effective leadership. She is supported well by the senior management team. There is shared understanding of the school's effectiveness and the areas for development. These are laid out clearly in the good school development plan. The school operates well on a day-to-day basis. It is calm and well ordered. The leadership team is particularly successful in sustaining the school's Christian ethos. Links with outside agencies, including the Church, other schools and parents are good. However, some parents would like to see the parental links strengthened. Governors provide a good balance between the level of support and challenge. Many have considerable experience and bring a breadth of understanding to the governing body. Their skills and knowledge were used well in the planning for, and the equipping of, the re-sited nursery. They monitor the work of the school well and set challenging targets for improvement. The capacity for improvement is good because leaders and managers know the school well and are committed to ensuring standards continue to improve and pupils achieve their potential. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision has improved significantly since the last inspection. There is now a well thought out, purpose built Nursery unit next to the Reception class. This has enabled greater continuity and has helped to improve standards.

Children are confident, feel safe and develop positive attitudes to learning. This is because relationships are good and induction procedures ensure the children settle quickly into the Nursery. They make good progress in both the Nursery and in the Reception class because teaching is good and the curriculum is well organised to incorporate all areas of learning. Assessment procedures are thorough and used well to plan future work. The carefully planned activities match the children's needs and promote independence. By the end of the Reception class, the vast majority are working above the expected levels in mathematical development and in communication, language and literacy. Their social skills are good. There is still scope for the two classes to work more closely together to promote further the development of the children's physical and social skills through joint use of the outdoor area.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further develop the curriculum to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to make creative links between subjects.
- Make full use of the information technology facilities, recently adopted by the school, to analyse assessment data in order to help improve pupils' progress from good to outstanding.

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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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

20 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's C of E Primary School Rickmansworth, WD3 1NY.

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed my visit and talking to you. I was very pleased to hear that you like coming to school and to see your attendance is well above average. Throughout the day, your behaviour was excellent and you demonstrated that you are keen to take responsibility. You have an outstanding understanding of healthy living and being safe. I was impressed by your good contribution to the school community and by your efforts to raise funds to help the child in Africa to have an ear operation. I am sure the money spent on making a bird-hide will bring you hours of pleasure and it will give you the chance to find out about wildlife.

Your school provides you with a good education. You get off to a good start in the Nursery. You make good progress as you move through the school. By the end of Year 6, your achievement is good. The standards you reach in the Year 6 national tests in English, mathematics and science are usually above those reached in most schools. Sometimes, they are exceptionally high, although the standards you reach in English and mathematics tend to be higher than those in science.

To help you to reach even higher standards and to make certain you continue to enjoy your learning in all subjects, I have asked your headteacher and teachers to continue to look at how the curriculum is organised and the way in which it is taught. I have also asked them to use the computer program they have just bought to assist in identifying exactly the extra support you need to help improve your progress.

Your headteacher and the governors have worked hard to get the new nursery built and set up. I think it is great and so much better than the old classroom. I am sure you will all miss your headteacher when she leaves at the end of term.

I hope that you will continue to enjoy your education at St Mary's Primary.

With best wishes for the future.

David Wynford Jones

Lead inspector