

# St Mary and St John CofE VA Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120229
<b>Local Authority</b>	Rutland
<b>Inspection number</b>	313559
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Aldridge

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

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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	159
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Hugo Spiegl
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Sam Morton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Church Street North Luffenham Oakham Rutland LE15 8JR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01780 720184
<b>Fax number</b>	01780 720184

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Mary and St John is a smaller than average primary school that serves a rural area. There are more boys than girls. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage with very few from minority ethnic groups. The percentage eligible for free school meals is very low. The proportion with learning difficulties is higher than average. The school shares its location with a community centre that accommodates a pre-school; most children from this setting join the school. The school provides care for pupils before and after the school day. There was a change of headteacher in September 2005 and since then most of the teaching staff have changed. The school's work has been recognised by the Healthy Schools Award and Active Mark.

## 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 and St John is a good school. It has some outstanding features and provides good value for money. The vast majority of parents are delighted with the school. One typical comment was that the school has, 'A caring, friendly, nurturing culture which promotes confidence in all the children.' The school is particularly successful in encouraging pupils' personal development and well-being, which is outstanding. This is the result of the outstanding curriculum, which provides exemplary opportunities for pupils' personal development, and the good care and support provided. Pupils develop as responsible, active and caring young citizens of their school and wider community. Through well-developed and productive links with the local community, parents, the church, local schools and services, pupils learn exceptionally well to lead healthy and safe lifestyles and acquire effective skills that will benefit them in secondary school, and ultimately the workplace.

When children enter the Foundation Stage their knowledge is often in line with expectations but in some years exceeds this. They make a good start and progress and achieve well. Pupils' good progress and achievement continue, as the result of both good teaching and their positive attitudes to school and learning. They love coming to school and clearly enjoy all that it has to offer. Most often, standards are above average by Years 2 and 6. In the last two years, standards in English in Year 6 have been well above average. The school has been successful in accelerating pupils' progress in writing in Key Stage 2. However, in Key Stage 1, the school's best efforts have not been so effective because there have been several changes of staffing in the mixed class of Years 1 and 2. As a result, standards in writing are average.

The school has been successful in recruiting skilled staff and teaching is mostly good and occasionally outstanding. The available classrooms and different sizes of cohorts make it necessary to have some classes with mixed year groups. Teachers plan carefully so that pupils do not miss out or repeat work in these mixed classes. Teachers also use their accurate assessment of pupils' abilities to plan tasks that provide a suitable challenge for pupils of different abilities. However, in mixed classes, the greater challenge for more able pupils is not always sustained throughout lessons, and so their learning is not always extended enough.

The school is well led and managed, resulting in good improvement since the last inspection. Many parents commented positively on the difference made by the headteacher. Despite a period of turbulence in staffing, there have been many worthwhile developments, particularly in the internal and external environments. Whilst much of the development was led by the headteacher at first, this has now broadened out to include the skilled assistant headteacher and other staff with leadership responsibilities. Governance is good. Governors are immensely supportive and fully involved in the processes of monitoring and evaluation. Self-evaluation is good. It is accurate and draws well on the views of parents and pupils. Staff make effective use of information on how well pupils in Years 1 to 6 are doing. However, in the past, data in the Foundation Stage has not been used routinely to establish whether children progress equally well in all areas of learning. The recently appointed coordinator has suitable plans to rectify this.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Because teaching is good and children are well cared for, they make good progress and reach or exceed the early learning goals by the end of the Reception year. They quickly settle because the staff work closely with colleagues in the pre-school, as well as with parents. Much has been done to ensure that assessment is accurate and reliable. Sessions provide a good range of stimulating and enjoyable experiences that are linked into topics, making learning meaningful for children. There is excellent use of information and communication technology (ICT), which is effectively integrated into topics. For instance, children were making Greek flags and designing passports using computers as part of their topic 'The Airport'. ICT is also used to very good effect in the weekly 'Photostory' and children's records of achievement. The recently appointed coordinator provides good leadership and has breathed new life into the provision. As a skilful and experienced practitioner, she has quickly diagnosed areas for further development and has very clear vision for the future of the Foundation Stage that includes the use of data to evaluate progress in each area of learning.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of writing by Year 2 so that they are as high as those in reading.
- Provide tasks that challenge all pupils, including the most able, in mixed-age classes, to maximise their progress throughout each lesson.
- Systematically collect information on how well children in the Foundation Stage progress each year, and use this to evaluate the provision in each area of learning.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

In recent years, standards have been above average overall by Years 2 and 6. However, standards in Year 6 dipped last year, reflecting the unsettling effect of staffing changes in that class. Nonetheless, standards were well above average in English and this year teacher assessment shows that standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science. Inspectors sampled assessments and found these to be accurate. This cohort of pupils entered Year 3 with above average standards, showing that they have made good progress.

In Year 2, teacher assessment shows that standards are above average this year, although they are not as high in writing as they are in mathematics and reading. While there has been a concerted effort to raise writing standards across the school this has not been as effective in Key Stage 1 as it has in Key Stage 2 because of changes in staffing. Nonetheless, the school's tracking of pupils' progress in writing shows that this is accelerating in Year 2. Analysis of the school's results in 2007 indicates that all pupils made equally good progress overall, and although boys outperformed girls in Year 2 there was little difference by Year 6.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They respond extremely well to the Christian ethos which so strongly pervades the school. They show a maturity beyond their years and their respect for one another and for adults is tangible. They thoroughly enjoy school, show a sense of curiosity and understanding of others and respond very well to the school's initiatives to broaden their cultural horizons through the arts and through learning

about other faiths. Their behaviour is outstanding both in class and in the playground. Pupils willingly take on wide-ranging responsibilities, for instance as 'Muddi Buddies' who grow garden produce. Attendance is above average and attendance at the range of stimulating clubs in sports, arts and environmental science is excellent, ensuring that these activities are purposeful and fulfilling. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community. Their involvement in common projects, such as the Year 6 production, is outstanding and all engage actively in charitable work.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is supported well through training and a detailed teaching and learning policy. Good relationships create a harmonious learning environment and teachers select enjoyable tasks for pupils to tackle. In most lessons pupils are well challenged but occasionally the challenge for more able pupils is not sustained throughout. Teachers use appealing resources, including ICT, and stimulate pupils' different senses to take good account of the variety of ways in which they learn. Pupils are involved well in their learning because they have personal targets and teachers ensure that they know the lesson objectives. Marking is good and pupils respond to teachers' comments, taking responsibility for their own learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The rich, exciting and stimulating curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' personal development. For a small school the range of clubs and activities is outstanding, firing pupils' imaginations and helping to secure a climate where enjoyment and achievement at school are highly valued. There is good provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT, as well as a modern foreign language for all in Key Stage 2. Themes around personal, health and social development underpin literacy work and topics. Planning supports good academic progress for all, including those pupils with specific learning needs. Additional initiatives for gifted and talented pupils are well chosen and capture pupils' interest.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Staff have a high level of commitment to the care of the children, creating a safe, warm and friendly environment. Pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education and transition arrangements for those going on to secondary school are very good. The school works well with parents, despite a few parents feeling that communication from the school is not always timely. Assessment procedures are good in Years 1 to 6; the school tracks pupils' progress carefully, intervening effectively with extra support where necessary. Pupils are well informed about their progress. They understand the reasons for their targets, even if some do not always fully understand the language in which they are couched.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong leadership; he has a crystal-clear vision for the school that is effectively shared by all and is supported well by his assistant headteacher. Now that staffing is stable, leadership roles are widely shared. Some teachers are relatively new to their roles, such as the special needs coordinator, but they are well supported in developing the necessary skills to do their jobs effectively. Change is effectively supported by a well-constructed development plan, arrived at through a self-evaluation process that involves all stakeholders. Whilst self-evaluation is under-developed in the Foundation Stage, the new coordinator has the skills and experience to rectify this. Governors play their part effectively and ensure that statutory requirements are met. The school has good capacity to improve further.

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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?	1
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 <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 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	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	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

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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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.

## Annex A

**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 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

30 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary and St John Primary, Oakham, LE15 8JR

Thank you for making the inspectors welcome at your school when we visited recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit. Thanks also to those who talked to us about school life and showed us their work. We came to see how well you are all getting on and to find out whether there are any things that could be done better.

We were most impressed with the way that you are all developing as young people. We found you most polite and your behaviour was outstanding. Your attendance is good. You make an excellent contribution to the school and to the wider community. There are many ways in which you help one another and others less fortunate than yourselves. The new potatoes grown by the Muddi Buddies were delicious! We could see that you know very well how to lead a healthy lifestyle and that you eat sensibly and exercise regularly. You also behave safely and know very well how to keep yourselves safe. We were pleased to hear that you enjoy school so much and your attendance at clubs outside school time is excellent.

We were also pleased to find that you are making good progress. Some of you have had a lot of changes of teacher recently, and this has been a worry for some parents. However, things have settled down now and the staff are all behind Mr Morton, helping him and the governors to make your school an even better place.

We have asked the school to do three main things. Staff will be helping pupils in Year 2 to improve their writing skills so that they are as good at writing as they are at reading and mathematics. Teachers are going to make sure that you all have work that really makes you think throughout all lessons. In the Foundation Stage, they are going to collect information about how well children are doing so that they can see what is going well and what needs to improve.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Mrs S Aldridge

Lead inspector