

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121547
Local Authority	York
Inspection number	314034
Inspection date	5 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Ross Parker

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Cannings
Headteacher	Mrs Ruth Ellis
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2003
School address	Askham Richard York North Yorkshire YO23 3PD
Telephone number	01904 707125
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The following issues were investigated: pupils' achievement and their personal development; elements of teaching and learning, the curriculum; care, guidance and support, and leadership and management which were most influential in supporting these outcomes. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, analysis of pupils' work, discussions with the staff, pupils and the chair of governors, as well as the scrutiny of school documents and parent questionnaires. 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 the self-evaluation form, were not justified.

Description of the school

This is a small rural school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average, and more than a quarter of pupils have been identified as able, gifted or talented. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational need and none speak English as an additional language. The majority of children have experienced pre-school before entering the Reception class. The school has a strong partnership with nurseries and playgroups in the area. Children's attainment when they start school is above the level typically expected. The school has recently been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark for the second time. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2007.

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's Primary School provides a good education with outstanding features. Governors have successfully supported the school to maintain good achievement and personal development in the context of significant staffing changes. Pupils enjoyment of school is outstanding. A typical parental view is that the happy, caring environment nurtures and challenges pupils so that they are very well prepared for secondary school.

By the end of Year 2, standards are usually above average and were exceptionally high in 2007. They have been consistently above average by the end of Year 6, and standards in mathematics have been exceptional over recent years. Children from different backgrounds do equally well. Class teachers' good attention to individual needs ensures that the majority of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress as quickly as their peers. Boys have not made as much progress as girls in recent years, and the school is working effectively to develop their reading and to improve the structure of their writing.

The inspection confirmed the school's judgement that pupils' good progress is helped by good, and sometimes outstanding teaching, linked with good care, and a curriculum that is enjoyable and well adapted to pupils' needs. In a minority of lessons, the pace of learning slows, and the normally very good behaviour is interrupted as some pupils lose interest. In most lessons there is a combination of a stimulating environment, exciting activities, and a level of challenge that pupils find enjoyable. This was seen as pupils in Years 5 and 6 prepared to be 'evacuated' as part of their study of Second World War. The combination of clothing and artefacts from the 1940s and 21st century information and communication technology (ICT) really engaged the pupils to reflect on the emotions they would have experienced. Teachers are good role models and give clear guidance so that pupils know what successful work will look like. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own performance, and teachers' marking involves a dialogue where pupils can explain how confident they are about particular skills and concepts. There is very good guidance to help pupils see what they need to do next to improve their literacy and this is supporting improvements in standards for both boys and girls. The school is ready to roll out a similar system for numeracy. Tasks are challenging and enjoyable for higher attaining pupils in English, mathematics and science, but in some other lessons, opportunities are missed to stretch these pupils sufficiently. The school's focus on extending this challenge across every subject has been slowed by staff changes and is currently being re-established. Each pupil's progress is rigorously tracked and the school is setting challenging targets for each individual that reflect suitably high expectations. The school has successfully started to enrich the curriculum. Teachers exploit interesting activities based on drama and first-hand experiences, and use these to develop basic skills in literacy, mathematics and science. There is a range of popular extra-curricular activities, and some excellent links with other schools and with local industries give pupils experience as entrepreneurs. These, together with high quality work in ICT, and team building on residential visits give pupils an outstanding preparation for future economic well-being. The school makes good use of its links with a nearby specialist sports college, but there is scope for the development of more sporting activities and more structured outdoor play opportunities at break-times.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Strong church links complement a consistent focus on reflection and spiritual values. Pupils enjoy the increasing emphasis on social and emotional aspects of learning through circle time. Very good links with a school in Ghana are part of a continuing drive to broaden the children's global links. Pupils have very

good opportunities to be independent from their first days in the school. These are difficult to sustain for older pupils who work in small classrooms with little space to work away from the whole class, although the recent library development has been a very good step towards improving this. The school ensures that relevant safeguarding procedures are in place. Pupils feel very secure and have a good understanding of how to stay healthy. They make good use of the facilities that are available for outside play. They contribute well to local events and charity fund-raising. Older pupils give good support to younger pupils around the school, but there are limited opportunities for them to take on additional responsibility.

The headteacher is working well to build on the established strengths of the school and looking forward to the arrival of a deputy headteacher in spring next year. Together with her staff and governors, she has gained a good picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school has good capacity to improve and is continually seeking to emulate the best practice developed in other schools.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school judges the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage to be good and the inspection confirmed this. Children make good progress because of the good range of carefully planned and managed activities. Transition between play activities and learning is seamless. Teachers and support staff provide a good level of challenge and track children's progress very carefully. Children are well cared for and supported and particularly appreciate the support given by their Junior Partners. The school is working well to develop writing skills through focused provision on fine motor skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to engage in sport and structured outdoor play.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and support each other within school.

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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 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?	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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	1

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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you all for the very friendly welcome you gave me when I came to visit your school recently. I really enjoyed meeting you and having the chance to talk to you. The school gives you a good education, with outstanding areas.

Here are some of the really good things about your school

You make good progress throughout your time at school and are well prepared for secondary school. I was impressed by your very considerate behaviour and by the friendly atmosphere in the school. You have good opportunities to help in school and in your local community. You understand well how the right food and the right amount of exercise will keep you healthy, and you really enjoy the 'hands on' experiences that the school gives you, such as the enterprise projects and the Second World War study. You also really appreciate the efforts that the teachers and other adults make to ensure that you are safe and really enjoying yourselves. You value the process of setting targets and the way that you are encouraged to take responsibility for your learning.

The adults in school are always looking to improve. Currently, they are working to help you to reach the same very high standards in science and English that you already achieve in maths. They are also developing new ways to challenge pupils who are already reaching higher levels.

I have asked the school to do some things which will make it even better

The school already provides some good opportunities for you to be active, but I have suggested that they look for ways to give you more sporting activities and more organised activity at break and lunchtime, so that you can put your understanding of how to be healthy into action. I have also asked them to find more ways for you to take responsibility and support each other. You already work well as Junior Partners and school council representatives, and I am confident that you could take the same sort of responsibilities in other areas.