

St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Burton Latimer

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122015
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314189
Inspection dates	14–15 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Rajinder Harrison

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	272
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christopher Pykett
Headteacher	Tony Collins
Date of previous school inspection	3 June 2003
School address	High Street Burton Latimer Kettering NN15 5RL
Telephone number	01536 722757
Fax number	01536 724241

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with national the average but the proportion having a statement for special educational need is very low.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

The school is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education because the quality of teaching and the curriculum are inadequate and pupils in Years 3 to 6 fail to achieve as well as they should. Standards remain too low in Key Stage 2 and pupils make inadequate progress. While leaders and managers have worked effectively to improve the premises and establish better systems to check pupils' progress, they have not addressed the weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum adequately in order to help pupils learn effectively in every class. Too many pupils do not develop the key skills to the levels required to prepare them adequately for the future.

Children start school with knowledge and skills that are at the levels expected for their age. Satisfactory teaching helps them make adequate progress in the Foundation Stage, at the end of which their attainment is typical for five-year-olds. This rate of progress is maintained reasonably well in Years 1 and 2, so that by the end of Year 2, overall standards are broadly average, although they are below average in writing.

Following this sound start, uninspiring teaching and a general lack of challenge in too many lessons result in inadequate pupil progress by the time they leave school. At the end of Year 6, pupils' overall standards are significantly below average. The school's data show that in Years 3 to 6, there is considerable underachievement, particularly among the more able pupils, in every class and subject. Standards in Year 6 are well below average in writing and mathematics and below average in science. Overall teachers' planning does not accurately meet the needs of all pupils and teacher expectations are not high enough, particularly of the more able pupils. However, in one or two classes, teaching is effective. While activities to enrich the curriculum are good, the basic curriculum, with too few opportunities for independent learning through practical tasks, fails to excite and challenge pupils. Pupils who need extra help with their learning have the support they need to make satisfactory progress.

Parents are positive about the school and appreciate all that the headteacher has done to provide a welcoming environment where pupils feel safe, secure and happy. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. They attend regularly and understand well how to stay safe, fit and healthy. Many enjoy the various sports clubs the school offers. Pupils say that they enjoy school but that some lessons are uninteresting. Pastoral care is good and pupils feel they can readily turn to someone if they need help. The guidance to support pupils' academic progress is inadequate and does not help them to achieve all that they should.

The school has a realistic view of itself. However, its understanding of the problems has not been followed up by strategies that have led to improvement. The issues raised in the previous inspection have not been fully addressed and standards have declined. The local authority has tried to help managers improve the school but so far, these joint efforts to improve teaching and raise standards have been unsuccessful. Whilst Governors have been very supportive in holding the school to account regarding pupils' progress, the impact of this has yet to take

effect. School leaders are unable to demonstrate that they have the capacity to effect improvement urgently.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

In the absence of a Foundation Stage leader, the two teachers in Reception ensure that the teaching and curriculum meet children's needs appropriately. Aspects that are less secure, for example calculation and writing skills, are given greater emphasis. The work on learning letters and sounds is particularly effective in developing children's word-building skills for reading. Teaching is satisfactory. Staff check that children explore everything, but opportunities are missed to challenge the more able to extend their skills. Through careful observations, children who need extra help with their learning are identified early and supported well. Children feel happy and safe and relate well to others. A good balance of adult-guided activities and those that children select helps them gain confidence and independence. Occasionally, teachers tend to talk for too long and direct children too much and this hampers the progress of those who find it difficult to sustain interest and attention. Through well-organised activities, such as visits to the shops and fire station, children explore and have fun. The outside area is a popular attraction but is limited in size, for example for children to extend their coordination skills using wheeled toys.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement in writing throughout the school and in mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6.
- Improve teaching so that pupils' work matches their needs accurately and expectations of all pupils are higher, particularly for the more able.
- Develop the curriculum so that it stimulates more active and independent learning and challenges all pupils more.
- Make sure pupils have the guidance they need to improve their work.
- Improve leadership and management so that every teacher is held to account regarding pupils' progress and that leaders at all levels drive school improvement more urgently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The satisfactory progress children make in the Foundation Stage is maintained reasonably well in Years 1 and 2. In all but pupils' writing, standards are average by the end of Key Stage 1. Developing pupils' writing has been a priority throughout the school this year, but early analysis of the 2008 test results indicate they are lower than those in 2007. In Years 3 to 6, pupils progress well in their reading and attain above average standards in every year group. However, their progress in writing, mathematics and science is inadequate and overall standards by Year 6 are well below average. Teachers know how much progress is expected of pupils in each year group but fail to plan work to help all of them make these gains. Inadequate teaching and weaknesses in the curriculum in Years 3 to 6 result in considerable gaps in pupils' learning so that they are unable to achieve all that they should by the end of Year 6. Pupils who need additional help with their learning receive the individual support they need to make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development are satisfactory. Pupils are polite and friendly. They form good relationships and respect others; they enjoy learning and try hard. Their behaviour is satisfactory. While most pupils behave well, a few lose concentration when lessons lack interest and challenge. Pupils understand well the need to stay safe and healthy, and the dangers of the misuse of drugs. Many attend the sports clubs and make healthy choices at the tuck shop they organise. They are confident that they can go to their teachers if problems arise. Pupils contribute well to the community by helping around the school. School council members organise playground activities and older pupils look after younger ones. Through recycling projects, supporting charities and links with the church, pupils contribute well to the wider community. Many visits and visitors extend pupils' awareness of the world of work and leisure. Pupils' understanding of the cultures and traditions represented in Britain today is less well developed. Their attendance is satisfactory, but every day too many arrive late. Pupils' low achievement in their basic skills in Key Stage 2 means their preparation for the next stage of their education is inadequate.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is not good enough in Key Stage 2, and so pupils underachieve. Pupils' books and assessment information indicate that in too many lessons, a significant number of pupils do not learn enough. The pace of learning is too slow and teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils are capable of learning. Too often, pupils of all abilities do the same work. This highlights the fact that teachers do not take sufficient account of what pupils need to do to move on successfully. Teachers direct learning too much and offer pupils too few opportunities to investigate their own ideas. Consequently, a few become bored and uninterested. The teaching in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is satisfactory, except for the teaching of writing. There is, however, some good teaching in the school. Where teaching is good the lessons are lively and offer relevant challenge. As a result, pupils achieve well. Good relationships help pupils develop positive attitudes towards their work and most try their best. Teaching assistants sensitively support pupils who need help with their learning and these pupils often achieve better than their classmates.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

While the curriculum covers all that it should, most teachers fail to plan successfully to meet the needs of all the ability groups in their classes, particularly at Key Stage 2. Consequently, too many underachieve. In many classes, there is an over-reliance on worksheets that do not challenge pupils enough. Pupils have too few opportunities to practise skills learnt in English and mathematics because links between other subjects are not sufficiently well established. Improving standards in writing, mathematics and science have been priorities, but pupils do not have enough opportunities to work independently; for example on investigations, in order to learn more effectively. Activities to boost pupils' problem-solving skills in order to raise standards in mathematics have had little impact. Following the previous inspection, provision for information and communication technology has improved and pupils use computers regularly

to support their learning. Satisfactory provision for developing pupils' personal skills underpins their sound personal development. Many visits and visitors and a variety of clubs extend pupils' knowledge and skills well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Care arrangements are good. Child protection, and health and safety and safeguarding procedures, are all secure. Pupils who have specific learning needs are supported sensitively, with external agencies consulted where necessary to provide specialist guidance. Pupils say that staff listen to them well if they need help. While attendance is monitored well, strategies to improve punctuality are ineffective. Children are supported well when they first start school.

Academic guidance is inadequate. The school now has good systems to check each pupil's progress. Any that fall behind are identified quickly and receive additional help. However, the information is not used well enough to set targets that challenge pupils sufficiently. For example, in some classes, pupils' targets in literacy and numeracy are often too easy and not revised regularly enough to motivate pupils successfully. While marking is good in one or two classes in showing pupils what they need to do to improve their work, the practice is inconsistent and most teachers fail to check that pupils respond to the guidance in subsequent work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The school's leaders recognise that weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum have resulted in pupils' underachievement but, despite their efforts to put things right, their strategies to rectify this over the last two years have not had the desired impact. They have established effective tracking systems that have exposed underachievement in specific classes and subjects and their monitoring has identified significant failings in teaching. However, some teaching fails to follow school policies, for example regarding planning and marking, and is not improving quickly enough to raise achievement. The school's targets, while reasonably challenging, are not being realised. The leaders have not done enough to hold teachers to account regarding pupils' progress and the continued low standards. Despite additional support from the local authority, subject leadership remains particularly poor in mathematics and science. Urgent action is required to improve the school's performance but the lack of leadership skills of senior managers and subject leaders limits the school in its ability to bring about the changes needed without additional support.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
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	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

16 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's C of E Primary School, Kettering NN15 5RL

You may remember that three inspectors visited your school recently to see how you were doing with your learning. I am writing to tell you what we found out. Thank you for making us welcome and for being so friendly and polite.

We enjoyed talking to you about school, and learning about the good friends you make and the many interesting activities you do. You always try to do your best but we agree with those of you who said you could do harder work. Your school is certainly a friendly place and you work and play together sensibly. Most of you behave well and look after each other. You do kind things like raising money for charities. You told us that you feel safe at school and that staff help you if you have problems. You know how to look after yourselves and understand well the need for regular exercise and eating healthy foods. You told us that you are happy in school. We could see that, from watching you enjoy yourselves in the playground. We were particularly impressed with how well you run your healthy tuck shop and all that you do to recycle waste.

While we think that there are some good things about the school, we feel that it needs extra support to help you to do better in your work. We have asked the headteacher and the staff to do a number of things to improve your school. Inspectors will come back and check regularly to see how they are getting on.

We think that you could achieve higher standards in writing, mathematics and science, so we have asked teachers to help you to make better progress, particularly in Years 3 to 6. To help with this, we want teachers to make all your lessons really interesting and make sure you have work that really challenges you. For example, we would like your teachers to give you more investigations and activities that you can do by yourselves so that you learn more. We also want them to set you really challenging targets and mark your work so that you know what you are doing well and what you need to do to improve your work. We want the school to improve as quickly as it can and we have asked your school leaders to make sure this happens. Once these improvements have been made, you will be able to do much better.

There are things you could do to help, too; for example, you could ask for harder work if it is too easy and ask teachers to give you targets that will help you achieve more. I hope that you will all do well in the future.

Yours sincerely Rajinder Harrison Lead Inspector

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Yours sincerely
Rajinder Harrison
Lead Inspector