

The Primary School of St Mary and St Martin

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122796
Local Authority	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LA
Inspection number	314404
Inspection dates	11–12 October 2007
Reporting inspector	John Foster

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	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Susan Dawson
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Piddington
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2004
School address	Retford Road Blyth Worksop Nottinghamshire S81 8ER
Telephone number	01909 591218
Fax number	01909 591218

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves the village of Blyth and the surrounding area. All pupils are of White British origin, with English as their first language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is significantly below average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average. There are no pupils requiring a statement of special educational needs. The school has recently gained the Healthy Schools' Gold Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which gives good value for money. The school's evaluation of its provision is largely accurate. However, in its 'satisfactory' evaluation, it underestimates the effectiveness of the leadership and management. The school is, in fact, led and managed well. The headteacher has moved the school forward effectively and it is well placed for further improvement. The headteacher's clear vision for the school's development, shared by the staff and governors, is evident from the school improvement plan. Governance has improved since the previous inspection because governors now monitor the school's performance more effectively. They are more involved in planning the school's future. The school has been successful in addressing issues identified at the previous inspection. The governors and staff have dealt very well with concerns relating to class sizes. Having analysed the options available, they have used the limited resources available effectively to minimise the problem. The school works well with others to support its work. For example, local secondary teachers help with the teaching of French and there are good links with the village football club.

Over the last five years, standards have generally been above average at the end of Year 2 and high by the end of Year 6. However, standards have varied more recently. Current standards are broadly average. Nevertheless, pupils of all abilities, including the significant numbers with learning difficulties in recent years, make good progress and achieve well in relation to the challenging targets that the school sets for them or to the specific difficulties that they face.

The pupils' good achievement and progress stem from the good teaching they receive. Starting in the reception class and throughout the school, they are taught well. Teachers plan lessons effectively, enabling pupils to learn well. This is particularly the case in Key Stage 2, where the large class sizes and range of ages in each class means that pupils' work needs much detailed organisation. Challenging questions are posed and pupils respond well to such challenges by working enthusiastically. The quality of marking, however, is variable throughout the school and does not always give enough information to pupils about how they can improve their work. Homework is set but a few parents commented that this was not always marked effectively and that there was a lack of consistency in setting homework. Inspection evidence supports the parents' views.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The care they are given is good. From their comments, it is clear that pupils enjoy school immensely. As one girl said, 'I love coming to school because the teachers are great and they make lessons fun.' This is evident in pupils' exceptionally high attendance and exemplary behaviour. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are encouraged from an early age to care for each other and are diligent in this, displaying excellent social skills. Pupils' love of music, art and visits to the theatre, supports their cultural development well. However, pupils are aware of other cultures in Britain but they have little first hand knowledge of these cultures. The school provides a good curriculum, encouraging pupils to live healthy lifestyles and how to keep themselves safe. Pupils make a good contribution to the community. The school council has instigated an effective 'Buddy' system in the playground and the school is fully involved in village activities. While most aspects of guidance given to pupils are excellent, academic guidance is good as pupils are not involved well enough in setting specific targets with their teachers.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good and the children are cared for and supported well. Historically, children have entered the Reception year with attainment above that expected for their age. During the past two years, however, indications are that children's attainment when they start school is broadly average. From this starting point, effective teaching results in good learning and good progress to the point of transfer to Year 1. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good, with many opportunities for the children to develop through play and through formal teaching, both inside and outside the classroom.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop procedures for setting targets with pupils so that they know levels at which they are working, and what they need to do to reach the next level.
- Ensure that the guidance that pupils receive gives them a clear understanding of how to improve their work.
- Ensure that the setting and marking of homework are consistently applied throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

For much of the last five years, standards have been high. In the 2006 national tests for 11-year olds, pupils' results in English and mathematics were significantly above the national average. These pupils, who attained above average standards at the end of Key Stage 1, achieved well in Years 3 to 6 to maintain such high standards. Unvalidated results for 2007 indicate that standards in Year 2 were again slightly above average. Pupils made good progress from somewhat lower than normal starting points in Year 1. Standards at the end of Year 6 in 2007 were broadly average overall. However, this does not indicate a decline in the quality of pupils' learning or achievement. The 2007 Year 6 group also achieved well, but their starting points in Key Stage 2 were relatively low because almost half of the year group had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The current Year 6 pupils are achieving well and making good progress with their work. They are also in line to attain broadly average standards and to meet the challenging, yet realistic, targets that the school sets for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. The close links established with the village churches help to develop the pupils' excellent spiritual understanding. The ways in which they are encouraged to look after each other supports their excellent social development. Pupils' cultural development is good but they are not fully aware of the wide cultural mix found throughout Britain. Pupils have excellent attitudes and they say that they enjoy school enormously. Pupils are very aware of the need to live healthy lifestyles and they are encouraged to eat healthy food. The excellent relationships that exist in the school help pupils to learn because they are keen to please their teachers. The school council is newly elected for this year and members from previous years have had a positive influence on the workings of the school. Community involvement within the village is good. Pupils are prepared well for their future lives through the good progress they make and their excellent social and spiritual development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good and this helps pupils to learn well and make good progress. Teachers plan work well and identify different tasks for pupils of differing abilities. The good relationships that exist between pupils and their teachers support the good learning by pupils. Teachers and support staff work very well together so that they are clear about what the pupils are to learn and the methods used to achieve their objectives. The quality of teachers' marking varies throughout the school and lacks consistency. At its best, it gives clear indications to pupils about how they can improve their work but too often, this is not the case. Pupils with learning difficulties get good support and are taught well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum. It is organised effectively using a two-year cycle to ensure there is no unnecessary repetition in the mixed age classes and that pupils of all abilities are catered for well. However, this arrangement is recent and has yet to have its full impact on the school's work. A good range of enrichment activities enhances the curriculum and good use is made of visits and of visitors who support pupils' learning. In the Foundation Stage, children enjoy a good curriculum, enabling them to make good progress in all areas of their learning, including the well established outdoor learning area. The good links with the local secondary school help to maintain the good curriculum. For example, the older pupils are taught French by the staff from the secondary school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a good overall quality of care, guidance and support for its pupils. Many aspects of the care provision are outstanding. For example, the pupils say that they feel very safe in school, are well cared for and that the staff are always there for them if they should experience a problem. The arrangements for keeping pupils safe meet current government requirements. Child protection, health and safety procedures and risk assessments are excellent. All staff have received appropriate training and are fully aware of what they should do if they have concerns over any child. Academic guidance is less well developed. Pupils can identify their own work targets but these do not relate to National Curriculum levels and they are not always given enough guidance about how they can progress to the next level of work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and, alongside her deputy and staff at all levels, has worked effectively to monitor, evaluate and improve the school. Governance is good. Governors are now fully involved in strategic planning. They have responded positively to the concerns of parents who felt that large class sizes were adversely affecting their children. The school has evaluated the impact large class sizes and has made the best use of available resources to maintain the best quality of education possible.

The school is monitoring the current situation effectively and continuing to review these arrangements. This systematic approach to specific issues and to whole school development demonstrates the school's good capacity for further 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?	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	3
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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

15 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of The Primary School of St Mary and St Martin, Nottinghamshire, S81 8ER

As you know, I came into school recently to see how you were getting on with your work. I would like to thank you for the welcome you gave me and for the ways in which you helped me. This letter is to let you know what I found out about your school.

Mrs Piddington and the staff take great care of you. You told me that you enjoy school and this is clear from your excellent behaviour and your outstanding attitudes towards all aspects of life in school. You told me that you feel safe in school and that you all get on well with each other. You are taught well and you say that you are usually given help to improve your work. A good range of activities is provided for you, both during lesson time and out of school time. When I met your school council, they told me about the work they want to do to help improve your school. The staff give you many opportunities to work in the village such as when you invite villagers to your Christmas performance.

In order to make your school even better I have asked Mrs Piddington, the staff and governors to:

- Involve you in setting targets so that you know which levels you are working at and what you need to do to reach the next level.
- Make sure that all the teachers tell you exactly what you need to do to make your work even better.
- Make sure that homework is set and marked consistently throughout the school.

With all best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John D Foster

Lead inspector