

St Mary's Church of England (VC) Primary School, Banbury

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123094
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314493
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Malcolm Johnstone

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Braybrook
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Wass
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
School address	Southam Road Banbury OX16 2EG
Telephone number	01295 263026
Fax number	01295 263026

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is similar in size to most other primary schools. It serves a diverse population, taking pupils from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who have English as an additional language is above average. A few of these pupils are at the early stages of English language acquisition. Most of the minority ethnic pupils are of Asian or Asian British heritage. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and behavioural needs. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory and improving education with good features. The headteacher, with the support of staff and governors, has established a strong sense of community and an attractive learning environment. As one parent commented, 'St Mary's is a warm and welcoming school with a strong sense of community'. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Most pupils say that they enjoy school. Their behaviour and attitudes are good. These aspects are outstanding for pupils in Years 5 and 6 and are significant factors in the good progress they make. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is a key factor in the high degree of racial harmony. Care, guidance and support are good and pupils say that they feel safe in school. There is a wide range of enrichment activities in the good curriculum.

Children enter the Nursery with skills that are below those expected for their age. They get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in English and mathematics but below average in science. This reflects satisfactory achievement for pupils of all abilities regardless of background or culture. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. However, progress through the school is not even due to variations in the quality of teaching. Pupils make most rapid progress in Years 5 and 6 because there is a higher proportion of good and outstanding teaching in these classes. The main inconsistency arises from inaccuracies by teachers in assessing what pupils have attained. This means that work does not always meet the needs of all pupils in classes. This is recognised by the school and things are improving as a result of actions taken by senior leaders.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The new leadership team is using a wider range of data to monitor the performance of individual pupils and groups. This is helping them meet challenging targets and is raising standards. The leadership team has been successful in bringing significant improvements in pupils' writing and reading this year. They have produced a good school improvement plan that points a clear way forward. These developments demonstrate the school has good capacity for further improvement. Self-evaluation is satisfactory and developing well. There is satisfactory monitoring of teaching and learning but this is not stringent or focused enough on identified priorities in the good school improvement plan. There remains scope to use a greater range of evidence, such as the scrutiny of work in pupils' books to evaluate their progress.

Most parents support the school in all key areas of its work. A small minority have some concerns about certain aspects. Most of these relate to behaviour, a lack of communication between home and school and inconsistencies in teaching. There is some evidence from the inspection to support the latter concern, although none of the teaching seen was unsatisfactory. The school is working to improve communication between home and school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. It has improved since the previous inspection. The majority of children reach the goals expected when they enter Year 1 but a minority does not, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Children enjoy the stimulating environment, behave well and make good progress because the teaching is good. The curriculum is exciting and creative with a good balance of indoor and outdoor play. Planning is effective and provides

for a balance of adult-led and structured play activities. There is effective use of the extensive outdoor area but there is a lack of large equipment. Assessment is good and used well to match work to children's abilities. A teaching assistant who speaks Urdu provides effective support for both the Asian children and their parents. Leadership and management are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards generally with a particular emphasis on science.
- Ensure that there is regular, stringent and focused monitoring so that more of the teaching and learning is good or better and pupils' progress is consistently good.
- Ensure greater consistency in the accuracy of assessment and use a wider range of evidence to evaluate pupils' progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are below average. They are better than in 2007 when they were well below the national average. This dip was due to a higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties in that particular year. Progress is satisfactory overall. It is consistently good towards the end of Key Stage 2 where the teaching is particularly effective and the work ethic of the pupils is outstanding. Consequently, standards rise to being average in English and mathematics, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. The recent emphasis on developing more creative and stimulating approaches to writing is bringing improvements in standards across the school. Standards in science are below average because there has been a lack of progression and continuity in the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties is similar to that of all other pupils. This is also the case for the pupils who have English as an additional language.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' have good attitudes to learning. They develop good appreciation of cultural diversity through religious education, music, French and collective worship. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and behave well. Pupils say that on the few occasions when bullying occurs it is dealt with quickly. They say that they feel safe in school and that teachers treat them fairly. They have good opportunities to take on responsibilities as school councillors, class, school and playground monitors. School councillors are proud of their contribution to playground development and in organising fundraising events. Pupils understand the benefits of healthy eating and exercise and participate enthusiastically in the many sporting activities available to them. These, and the standards pupils attain, prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is, however, some good and outstanding teaching. This is helping to raise pupils' achievements and accelerate their progress. Planning is effective with increasingly strong links established between subjects. Relationships are good and engender confidence in the pupils. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning is a good feature of the teaching and adds interest and motivation to learning. Where the teaching is most effective, expectations of behaviour and what pupils can achieve are high and there is a consistent emphasis on high quality work. At these times, assessment information is used well to plan the next stage of learning. These strengths are not a consistent feature in all lessons and in some, the pace of learning slows to a satisfactory level. In some classes, there is insufficient attention to high quality presentation and some untidy work is accepted.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has improved since the previous inspection. It is suitably broad and enriched by specialist teachers, visitors and visits. These extend pupil's learning well. There are good links between subjects and these make learning more meaningful for pupils. For example, in a good lesson in Year 6 the teacher skilfully linked science work on plants to writing songs based on the scientific principles. A good range of additional activities enhances the curriculum. These include sport and the arts. Pupils say they greatly enjoy themed events such as 'Winter Wonderland', which promote their knowledge of other cultures and link different aspects of the curriculum. The many popular after-school clubs, extend the curriculum well and have a strong impact on pupils' attitudes to school. Provision for ICT is good and ICT supports learning in other subjects effectively. The curriculum promotes pupils' personal, social and emotional development well and successfully supports healthy living and staying safe.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a secure environment in which pupils feel valued and supported. There is a strong commitment to encouraging enjoyment and achievement across all aspects of the pupils' development. There are secure arrangements for child protection, regular risk assessments are undertaken and all staff pay good attention to health and safety. Teaching assistants provide good additional support for pupils with learning difficulties and those at the early stages of learning English. This enables them to make steady progress towards achieving their targets. Academic guidance is good. Pupils have individual targets in literacy and numeracy and these help them to assess how well they are doing. Older pupils have excellent success criteria against which they can measure their progress. There is some inconsistency in marking. In some classes, marking has few comments to help pupils improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has ensured steady overall improvement since the previous inspection, despite the difficulties brought about by the inheritance of a deficit budget, falling rolls and changes in personnel and organisation. He receives good support from the relatively new leadership team in giving a clear focus on raising standards and improving achievement for all pupils. Pupils' academic achievement has improved steadily year on year since 2004 and more rapidly recently. The senior leaders are good role models in their own teaching and there is greater scope to use their skills more to improve teaching across the school. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not stringent or regular enough and does not draw on a wide enough evidence base. Consequently, there is inconsistency in pupils' progress and the quality of work they produce. Governance has improved markedly since the previous inspection and is satisfactory. Governors are playing an active and more effective role in monitoring the work of the school. They have a sensible and appropriately phased plan to bring the budget into balance.

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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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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?	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	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

12 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England (VC) Primary School, Banbury, Banbury, OX16 2EG

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. Following our visit, we would like to tell you about what we learned. Thank you, especially to the children who spent time talking and sharing with us their views of the school. We know that most of you enjoy coming to school and try to do your best. Your school is providing a satisfactory education and is improving. This means that while there are good things happening in school there are some aspects that should be better. These are some of the important things that we liked about your school:

- your school is friendly and welcoming
- you behave well and all get on well together
- with the help of the teachers you are improving your work in writing
- all the adults who work in school take good care of you and you tell us there is always an adult to help if you have any worries.

These are the most important things that we have asked your school to do to make it even better:

- improve your work in science
- ensure that all of your lessons are as good as the best ones
- keep a closer check on how well you are doing so the teachers can help you improve even faster.

With all best wishes for the future

Mr M Johnstone

Lead Inspector