

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123524
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	314624
Inspection date	22 January 2008
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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	152
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	W J Humphreys
Headteacher	Huw Humphreys
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2003
School address	Dawsons Rough Shawbury Shrewsbury SY4 4PF
Telephone number	01939 250487
Fax number	01939 250931

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the progress pupils make in Key Stage 2, particularly in writing and mathematics, especially bearing in mind the high mobility of pupils; the relative performance of boys and girls; the quality of pupils' personal development; and the effectiveness of assessment and target setting in helping pupils improve their work. Evidence was gathered from discussions with leaders, the chair of governors, pupils, parents and staff; visits to all classes; observation of other aspects of the school day such as assembly, break and lunchtime; and analysis of parents' questionnaires and school documentation, in particular data on pupils' progress. 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 its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Mary's Church of England Primary School is smaller than average and serves the village of Shawbury and the adjacent Royal Air Force station. A few pupils come from further afield as their parents appreciate the Christian ethos. With regular postings of Air Force personnel, there is a much higher than average proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual time.

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, where pupils make strong progress in both their academic and personal development. Parents are supportive and say such things as, 'My child has blossomed both in personal and educational terms. The school and its staff provide a safe, friendly, encouraging environment, which gives the guidance, experiences and stimulation needed to create well-rounded, happy individuals.'

One of the key strengths of the school is the way that pupils new to the school are helped to settle. There are very good systems for this and pupils play their part well by acting as 'buddies' to new pupils. The school makes excellent use of external agencies to help those who might have problems, whether educational or social. They have also worked hard to fully involve parents in the education of their children. Well-attended information meetings are held regularly and parents very much appreciate the approachability of the headteacher and staff and their readiness to discuss concerns that they might have.

The outstanding pastoral care, demonstrated in the settling of new pupils, contributes to pupils' good personal development. Pupils feel very safe and secure and although they say that there is some bullying, they feel that it is dealt with well as there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem. This is one of the key reasons, along with the interesting lessons, for pupils' first-rate enjoyment of school. The school council have been instrumental in encouraging pupils to eat healthily and many take full advantage of the wide range of sporting and other activities. Pupils' adoption of healthy lifestyles is therefore excellent. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school community and there are regular charity collections. However, apart from good links with the local church and the RAF base, there are few other links with the local community. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development is particularly strong, although pupils are insufficiently aware of the range of cultures represented in our society. They are being prepared well for their future in their development of basic skills and their growing independence.

Children join the school with levels of skills and knowledge below those expected. They make good progress in their Reception year, and this good progress continues through the school. Pupils achieve well to reach above-average standards by the time they leave. Nationally published figures appear to show this progress as average in Years 3 to 6 in 2007, having been well above average in 2005 and 2006. This does not take account of the large number of pupils who leave and are replaced by others. For example, only about a third of pupils who took the tests at the end of Year 2 in 2003 completed the course to the end of Year 6 in 2007.

The major reason for the good progress that pupils make is good teaching. There is a remarkable consistency of teaching between classes and teachers create good order, making a positive learning environment. There are very good relationships between pupils and adults, recognised by parents, who typically said, 'Children have a great deal of respect for all staff; this is due to the ethos of the school.' These relationships contribute well to pupils' good attitudes to their work. Teaching assistants play a key role in pupils' learning, carrying out many tasks, such as administering tables tests and providing the vital support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, so enabling them to make the same progress as their classmates.

The school keeps very good records of assessments and this shows that those who complete the full course make good progress. This progress has previously not been as good in writing or mathematics as it was in reading and science. This has been addressed well in writing, where

pupils are now making better progress. However, in mathematics, there are times when pupils do not move on to work suited to their particular abilities quickly enough and their progress, while satisfactory, is not as good as in other subjects. For example, all pupils in a class sometimes have to sit through lengthy introductions, when some could profitably be getting on with their work. The school correctly identified that girls were doing much better than boys in the tests in Year 2 and Year 6 last year. However, they have put in place initiatives to rectify this, which have been successful, as boys are now making progress similar to girls. Targets are set for pupils' next steps in learning, but these are not always written in language that pupils can understand. Neither are they made sufficiently relevant for pupils, as they cannot always see what they are leading to, in terms of improving their national curriculum levels. This relative shortcoming in academic support and guidance is the reason why support and guidance are good rather than outstanding.

A further key factor in pupils' enjoyment of school is the interesting and well-thought-out curriculum. Subjects are taught through a topic or theme, so that pupils can practise their key skills and links between subjects become clear. The curriculum has been improved considerably since the last inspection, when a number of subjects were not being presented well. All subjects are now being given their due attention and the creative subjects are particularly strong. Standards in music and art are therefore higher than one usually finds. There is a good range of visits, which increases the relevance of their learning to pupils, and a wide range of clubs and activities that pupils enjoy and their parents appreciate. The school also has a strong commitment to working with European partners, which gives pupils a real sense of belonging to the wider world and enables them to contact children and learn from cultures beyond their own.

At the root of the school's success is good leadership and management. The headteacher provides clear direction for the school and he is ably supported by the leadership team. Monitoring has been improved since the last inspection and there is a rigorous programme that has led to an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. A particular improvement is the checks that are made on pupils' progress, which is enabling intervention at an early stage for any in danger of underachieving. Governance has also improved and governors have a much clearer knowledge of the school, which is helping them to hold the school to account and challenge leaders. There is a sense of common purpose shared by all staff and governors to continue to take the school forward. This, allied to the progress being made, puts the school in a good position to continue on its upward path.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good provision is made for children in their Reception year, although their levels of skills and knowledge are still a little below expectations by the end of the year. They share a class with some pupils from Year 1 and the teacher takes full advantage of this by allowing some of the more able children to work alongside their older classmates, so challenging them and extending their learning. They make good progress in their Reception year, particularly in their emotional and creative development. Their progress in development of pre-writing skills is relatively weaker.

A good range of activities is planned for these children and it includes a good variety of work led by an adult and tasks that children choose for themselves. Their gains in learning are assessed well, allowing adults to plan tasks that suit the various levels of previous learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the effectiveness of targets for individual pupils by writing them in simpler language and relating them more clearly to National Curriculum levels.
- Raise standards in mathematics by ensuring that pupils move on to work suited to their particular abilities more quickly.

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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	1
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	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

23 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's C of E Primary School, Shawbury, SY4 4PF

Thank you so much for welcoming me to your school when I visited. I really enjoyed talking to you and hearing about everything that you do. So many of you told me how much you enjoy school and I am not surprised as it is a good school.

I think that these are the best things about your school.

- You are developing well into responsible and thoughtful young people and you make excellent choices when it comes to eating healthy food and taking exercise.
- All adults take exceptionally good care of you and help you to settle in very quickly when you join the school.
- Your school has excellent links with experts who help you when you are having difficulties.
- You are making good progress because you are being taught well.
- The school has planned an interesting curriculum for you and takes you on lots of trips and invites visitors into school to help you learn.
- Your headteacher and all the staff have good plans to continue to improve your school.

I have suggested that your school could improve the following things.

- Some of the targets set for you are not easy for you to understand and you do not always know how they will help you to reach higher levels.
- There are times in mathematics when you are not making the best possible progress because you are not always doing work that suits your abilities.

I know you will continue working hard and do your best to help your headteacher and teachers to make the school even better. Well done!

Yours sincerely

John D Eadie Lead inspector

23 January 2008

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- There are times in mathematics when you are not making the best possible progress because you are not always doing work that suits your abilities.

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Yours sincerely

John D Eadie
Lead inspector