

# St Mary's CofE Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123537
<b>Local Authority</b>	Shropshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314629
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sarah Conway

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	46
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Shirley Collin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anna Cook
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 May 2003
<b>School address</b>	Chapel Lawn Rd. Bucknell SY7 0AA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01547 530264
<b>Fax number</b>	01547 530160

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<b>Age group</b>	4-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

St Mary's is a very small school situated in a thinly populated rural area. Pupils, all of whom are White British, come from a wide range of social backgrounds and from a wide area. There is an even balance of boys and girls across the school. They are taught in two classes. The profile of the pupils joining Reception varies each year in both attainment and parents' social and economic backgrounds. Overall, the long-term picture is of children starting with broadly average skills and knowledge. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The present headteacher was seconded by the local authority in September 2007 for a year.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This school provides a satisfactory standard of education. Parents are fully supportive of the school and its staff, highly valuing the personal treatment they and their children experience. As one parent said, 'it is like having personal tutors for my children'. Over recent years, standards and achievement have been improving steadily. However, this was interrupted by the departure of almost all the staff in September 2007. The prompt action of the incoming headteacher in introducing rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress has led to improvements in teaching of the younger class and booster classes for older pupils to help them make up the ground lost. This year, standards are average and achievement is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. Information from assessment is beginning to be used to address gaps in pupils' learning but it is not always used to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all learners fully. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and receive careful attention from all staff. Pupils are happy and feel safe because of the family atmosphere of a small school. Attendance is very high as a result.

The curriculum is satisfactory, covering all the subjects that it should. A particular strength is the quality and range of activities before and after school which contribute to pupils' enjoyment and development. The school makes very good use of its partnerships with outside agencies which contributes to the good levels of progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities throughout the school. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory although pupils are not always clear about how to improve their work.

Despite having a significant teaching load, the headteacher has made a number of improvements. She has, in a very short time, moulded an effective team of teachers, teaching staff and other support staff so they work together promoting the well-being and achievement of pupils. The role of governors in school self-evaluation is limited and although supportive of the school, they are not fulfilling their role in holding the school to account.

The school has made progress since the last inspection particularly on improving attendance and has a clear focus on raising standards. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has satisfactory capacity to make further improvements.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The attainment of children when they enter the school changes from year to year, but is broadly at the expected level for their age. The recently appointed headteacher quickly identified some weaknesses in the tracking of children's progress in the Foundation Stage. She has introduced improvements to assessment and the evaluation of the information it produces. This year, staff have a reliable picture of children's achievements. Children plan what they would like to do with the teacher early in the day which ensures there is a balance between adult directed and children initiated activities. Constant proximity with older children, who work and play well with younger ones, together with the close attention of staff, means their personal and social development is good.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all pupils know their targets and understand what to do to improve so that standards and achievement rise.

- Use assessment information to ensure that the curriculum is better matched to all pupils' needs, particularly higher attaining pupils.
- Improve the capacity of the governing body to hold the school to account.

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**

Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. Reception aged children are given a satisfactory start so that they enter Key Stage 1 with satisfactory levels of development. The recent instability in staffing of the younger class caused some disruption to the progress pupils in Key Stage 1 were making. Prompt steps taken by the headteacher to secure stability in staffing has meant that recently pupils have made accelerated progress so they are on track to achieve average standards. Year 2 children have not had enough experience of writing at length so standards in writing are behind national expectations. Suitable improvements have been made to address this weakness.

In Key Stage 2, progress is satisfactory. Recently introduced tracking procedures show that pupils make particularly good progress in writing, and the quality of the pupils' writing is good. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the methods they can use to improve their writing. The school has also improved the tracking of progress in mathematics and science which was a weak process in the past because assessment was not regular enough. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good because staff know them well and work together to provide carefully tailored support.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The school takes full advantage of its small size with all staff and pupils knowing each other well so that there is a caring and friendly atmosphere that permeates the school. Pupils say staff look after them very well and they know who to talk to when they have a concern. Pupils play well together and accept each other's differences. Almost all pupils take part in team games organised by the teaching assistants at break time, which contributes to their good social and moral development.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The local vicar plays a significant part in the pupils' spiritual development, taking weekly assemblies and contributing to the religious education programme. The school recognises that its relative isolation presents a challenge to developing pupils' understanding of the diversity of society. To answer this, it has formed successful links with other schools, receives visitors from other countries and pupils learn about cultural diversity through, for example, exploring stories from other cultures.

Behaviour is good with pupils developing positive relationships with each other and adults. Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and enjoy coming as is evident from their very high levels of attendance.

The school is very much part of the local community and pupils take part in a number of fund raising activities such as the advent fair. There are some opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities in the school as playground and assembly monitors but the role of the school

council needs developing. Pupils are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education and life outside school.

Pupils benefit from a range of physical activities organised in and outside school and they have a good understanding of how to eat healthily.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. The subject knowledge of the recently arrived teachers is good and contributing to improvements in the progress pupils are now making. The school has made good use of its limited space to make the learning environment stimulating as well as attractive. Reception children are sometimes taught separately which is effective in ensuring they make progress in areas such as phonics. They also join the playgroup which takes place on the school premises during the week and this leads to improvements in their personal and social skills.

Relationships are good and teachers manage behaviour well. Activities are clearly explained so that pupils know what to do. Pupils are becoming less reliant on adults for help and their ability to work on their own is improving. Teachers' marking is thorough but there is little information on what pupils need to do to achieve their targets.

Teaching assistants are well trained and play a very important role in ensuring that the relatively high percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need in the school receive sensitive and clear guidance.

The school has recently begun to track pupils' progress against challenging targets which is contributing to raised standards and achievements.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The school has a satisfactory curriculum. The Foundation Stage curriculum is carefully planned so that the needs of the very small number of children are met satisfactorily. Recent improvements to work in English and mathematics at Key Stage 1 have contributed to increased progress particularly in writing. At Key Stage 2, booster classes are contributing to improved achievement and standards. At present, work is not always matched well enough to the needs of the range of learners, especially the more able.

Planning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very effective in addressing their social and personal development progress. Care is taken to ensure that when they are withdrawn from lessons they are able to make up what they have missed so that they make good academic progress.

Pupils appreciate the wide range of activities at lunchtime and after school which include music and drama as well as sport. Most children are involved in out of school activities and attendance is high and regular. The school works hard to use a range of visits to enhance the curriculum. The whole school enjoyed a recent visit to the Tutankhamun exhibition in London which not only contributed to pupils' knowledge of the Egyptians but provided them with an experience of a busy city.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The small size of the school enables staff to keep a close eye on the personal and social development of pupils, contributing to satisfactory care, guidance and support. Most pupils know their targets but struggle to say what they need to do to achieve them. Advice and support from external agencies for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families are very well used to develop 'the team around the child' approach. Reliable arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place. Regular health and safety checks are carried out and risk assessments are undertaken when appropriate.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The school's leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The new headteacher has quickly overcome the weaknesses that arose owing to the previous significant instability in staffing. She has worked hard to create a team of teachers and teaching assistants dedicated to the prompt correction of the earlier dip in standards. In a relatively short space of time and with the use of outside consultancy support, she has introduced a robust and rigorous system for tracking progress of pupils against challenging targets. She has also improved assessment processes so that staff now have an accurate picture of pupils' achievements.

The governing body is highly supportive of the school but it does not do enough to hold the school to account or play a large enough part in evaluating how well the school is doing.

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

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	4
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**

2 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary School, Bucknell, SY7 0AA

I would like to say how very much I enjoyed meeting you and chatting with some of you over a very good lunch. The apple crumble was great! You were keen to talk to me to tell me how happy you are at school and how much all the staff help you. Your very high levels of attendance show just how much you enjoy school.

I found that your school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. Teaching is satisfactory and the standards you are achieving are at the expected level. The progress you are making is improving and is satisfactory. The headteacher leads the school well and all the staff work together to make sure you feel safe and cared for. Your behaviour is good and you work and play well with each other. Many of you take advantage of the wide range of things to do after school.

To help the school get even better I have made the following suggestions about improvement.

- Staff should help you to use your targets by telling you what you need to do to reach them.
- Your work should be better matched to the level you are working at.
- Governors should play a bigger part in making the school a better place to learn.

You can help by remembering your targets and using them to help you to improve.

Best wishes for the future

Sarah Conway Lead inspector