

St George's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123540
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	314631
Inspection date	22 April 2008
Reporting inspector	David Cox

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Shaw
Headteacher	Heather Smith
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2004
School address	Schools Road Clun Craven Arms SY7 8JQ
Telephone number	01588 640229
Fax number	01588 640229

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St George's C of E Primary School is a smaller than average primary school. Nearly all of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. When children start in the nursery, their skills and knowledge are slightly below those typical of three-year-olds. A new permanent headteacher took up post in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St George's provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. Significant improvement since the arrival of the new headteacher has brought the school to this position. Parents are rightly confident in the school's provision and appreciate the positive changes the headteacher is making. Evidence confirms the effectiveness of the changes recently made. The school now has the capacity to improve further. The good care, guidance and support are reflected in pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils are safe and well cared for so that they develop confidence and a pride in their school. As one group said, 'It's a nice place to be and we all get along together.' Pupils and parents know that all staff will listen to their concerns.

Pupils are happy and enjoy their time at St George's. Behaviour in classes and around the school is good. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to stay safe and know what to do if they have a problem. Fruit and other healthy foods are increasingly popular and playtimes are active, social occasions. The school council is playing an increasing role in improving pupils' social awareness. Their suggestions, for example, have led to additional facilities in the toilets. Assemblies help pupils to consider moral issues and provide opportunities for reflection. Pupils' knowledge of multicultural Britain is good and they have a good understanding of how people from other parts of the world live. Secure basic skills and good opportunities for pupils to learn about the world of work mean that they are suitably prepared for secondary education and their later lives.

Stimulating activities enable children to make good progress in the nursery and the Reception class. In recent years, pupils' performance in the rest of the school has been below average and a small number of pupils made inadequate progress. However, standards are now broadly average, representing satisfactory achievement for pupils. Their information and communication technology (ICT) skills are below average because they have very little access to ICT resources and staff expertise is variable. Changes to the curriculum, including a greater focus on literacy and numeracy, mean that it is now satisfactory and this is leading to better rates of progress. Teaching is satisfactory, and is now more consistently helping pupils to develop good routines for learning. However, in some lessons, the pace of learning is slow and tasks are not challenging enough for pupils of differing abilities.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher has quickly and successfully won the support and trust of the staff and given them the confidence to work with her to make the changes necessary. Because of more thorough self-evaluation, detailed plans are in place to guide further improvement. Governors support the school well but are not yet rigorous enough in holding it to account.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Approximately half of the children start in the nursery with the skills and knowledge expected for their age, but the rest are below the expected levels. Children make good progress by the end of the Reception Year. They participate enthusiastically in the good quality activities provided. The warm, positive interaction between staff and children provides children with consistently good care which impacts positively on their well-being. The active parental involvement in planned activities helps to ensure continuity in children's learning. Behaviour is very good. Children's positive social skills are evident in their ability to get on well with each

other and their enjoyment of each other's company. Most are able to express themselves clearly during activities, although aspects of communication, language and literacy remain a weakness for a small minority of children.

The good leadership of the Foundation Stage ensures that all children have access to a wide range of activities that address their varied needs. Staff are aware that the quality of the outdoor provision is a relative weakness and have recently secured funding to facilitate this.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of teaching in Years 1 to 6 by ensuring that all lessons are well paced and work is challenging for all pupils.
- Raise standards in ICT by extending staff expertise and providing pupils with access to better ICT facilities.
- Ensure governors are more rigorous in holding 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' achievement is satisfactory. In Years 1 to 6, pupils make satisfactory progress and by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average. The recent decline in standards has been halted as a result of the success of the many initiatives introduced by the new headteacher. Work seen during the inspection confirms that pupils are now making much better progress, particularly in Year 6. Pupils' ICT skills are below average because they have very few opportunities to use the limited ICT resources.

Provision in the nursery is good and children make good progress. They learn to enjoy and play together. By the end of the Reception Year, standards are broadly average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school, and this is evident in their positive views. Pupils commented for example, 'We are encouraged to express and develop our individual ideas', and 'There are no small groups of friends, we are all friends with each other.' Pupils feel safe because of well-established systems such as the suggestion boxes. Effective communication links through the school council help to resolve issues of concern. Pupils make good choices of food at lunchtime because the school actively promotes healthy eating and an active lifestyle. They have many opportunities to make a positive contribution and develop enterprise skills through fundraising events such as coffee mornings. Pupils take part in lots of activities in the local area, such as the St George's Day parade through the village. They demonstrate good awareness of the benefits of caring for the environment and saving energy. Although pupils' skills in ICT are not developing as quickly in other areas, life skills such as working in a team and taking responsibility are developing well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Children are taught well in both the Nursery and Reception classes. Adults provide calm and patient support to all children, helping them to settle quickly. Children's learning is assessed carefully and work meets their differing needs effectively. In Years 1 to 6, teaching is satisfactory. Teachers get on well with pupils and manage behaviour effectively. Careful planning for learning for Year 6 pupils is helping them to make faster progress than in recent years, but there are still times when learning is too slow. This occurs when teachers do not make tasks challenging enough or expect enough work to be completed in the time available. The need for more challenge is an ongoing development priority identified in the school improvement plan. Teachers do not make enough use of ICT in their lessons due to limited resources. Teachers mark work regularly and acknowledge what pupils have achieved but do not always identify clearly enough what has to be done to make work better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Curricular planning has improved in recent months and now ensures there is a greater focus on improving literacy and numeracy skills. However, there are insufficient planned opportunities for the use of ICT and pupils spend too little time using computers. Pupils enrich their learning through 'Creative Partnerships' projects. This involves the school linking with a school in India, and through letters and parcels, the pupils are learning about each other's cultures. The school provides a wide range of sporting and other clubs and these are popular with pupils. Through the personal, social and health education programme, the school is effective in developing pupils' awareness of cooperative, safe and healthy living.

The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good because it is focused firmly on children's development in the six areas of learning. The 'Forest School' is very effective in broadening children's experiences. The immediate outdoor play area is less inviting and this reduces the opportunities for spontaneous exploration.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff are very concerned for the pupils' well-being and they take good action to safeguard them. Child protection and health and safety procedures are robust. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified at an early stage and a good range of support is in place to help promote their personal and academic development. Good links with parents help to make sure that pupils are happy and settled in their learning. Children settle quickly into the Nursery and Reception classes, and their self-confidence is encouraged by the good quality of care and guidance. Pupils are given helpful feedback to show them how they are learning, although this is not consistent in all classes. Sometimes they are told what to do next to improve their work but such guidance is not frequent enough. Whole-class targets have been introduced although individual targets for improvement are not known by pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Since the previous inspection, there has been a high turnover of headteachers (three in the last four years). This led to declining standards and inconsistent practice across the school. However, with the appointment of the new headteacher, the school is now in a much better position to improve again. As one parent commented, 'The school is now moving forward in leaps and bounds.' The headteacher has established a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and an accurate picture of its overall effectiveness. She has brought fresh ideas to the school and there is a good awareness that despite recent improvements, pupils' progress has not yet improved enough. Targets for improving performance are challenging. The school's improvement plan is suitably detailed and targets the most important aspects for the school to tackle. Whilst the headteacher makes good use of data to find out what is going well and how pupils' learning can be improved, this is not the case with all staff. Governors support the school well but their monitoring procedures have not been rigorous enough to overcome the problems caused by the high turnover in leadership.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St George's CofE Primary School, Clun SY7 8JQ

Thank you all very much for making us so welcome when we visited recently. We were impressed by your politeness, good behaviour and friendliness. You told us how much you enjoy school and about the way your teachers help you to learn. We enjoyed chatting to you over lunch and finding out about the clubs you can join. We are pleased to say that everything is at least satisfactory, and some things are good.

Your new headteacher wants the best for you. Because you enjoy school and work hard, you are now making better progress and reaching average standards. Your skills in ICT are not as good as they could be because your teachers do not make best use of the limited number of computers. You have lots of exciting opportunities through visits and many of you take part in a wide range of local events. It is very clear that you go to a caring school. Your behaviour is good and you all have good attitudes to learning. You show a good awareness of how to stay healthy and enjoy the many sporting activities that are available to you. We like the way the school council works to improve your school. You have a good knowledge and understanding of cultures from around the world.

Most of you make satisfactory progress with your work, but the younger children get off to a flying start in the Nursery and Reception. Those of you who need extra help make similar progress to other pupils because the staff give you lots of attention to help you learn.

You have lovely relationships with all the staff. Teachers know you well. Occasionally, however, they do not give you challenging enough work.

To make your school even better we have asked your teachers to give you more challenging work and make sure lessons keep up a good pace so that you can really do your best. Your teachers need to understand how best to use the ICT equipment to support your learning and improve your skills in ICT. The governors, who help your headteacher manage the school, need to check how well you are doing more often.

Thank you again for making us feel so welcome.

David Cox Lead inspector

23 April 2008

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David Cox
Lead inspector