

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Woodbridge

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124773
Local Authority	SUFFOLK LA
Inspection number	315052
Inspection date	6 December 2007
Reporting inspector	John Messer

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	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Anne Wright
Headteacher	Mr Alister Gourlay
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Burkitt Road Woodbridge Suffolk IP12 4JJ
Telephone number	01394 383649
Fax number	01394 383649

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the progress made in literacy, numeracy and science. Evidence was gathered from classroom visits, discussions with staff and pupils and examination of school documents, especially assessment data and parents questionnaires. 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 form, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. Attainment on entry to the school is above national expectations.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school, mainly because teachers and support staff share a commitment to making sure that all pupils flourish. The headteacher sets the tone and everybody is constantly seeking ways to improve provision and raise standards further. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Pupils are well motivated and are enthusiastic learners. Staff are encouraged to be innovative and they are always doing their best to improve pupils' achievement. They take up this challenge by, for example, introducing initiatives to develop greater enthusiasm for reading or new ways to use computers to support learning in literacy. Interactive whiteboards are used well to capture pupils' interest and to demonstrate ideas clearly. Teaching assistants are highly skilled and make a strong contribution to the quality of teaching.

Pupils' achievement is exceptional. They make very good progress in the Reception class and by the end of Reception they attain standards that are significantly above the expectations for their age in all areas of learning. They continue to make very good progress in Years 1 to 6. By Year 2, standards are exceptionally high in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. By Year 6, standards are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. These high standards are reflected in the results of national tests for pupils in Year 6. The amount of progress that pupils make in Years 3 to 6 ranks among the top six per cent of schools nationally. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported extremely well and make exceptionally good progress. Faster learners also do well. Test results show that twice as many pupils than the national average exceed the expected level and attain the higher level in English and mathematics. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and standards are now much higher than they were.

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils are confident learners and develop high levels of self-esteem. They are reflective and sensitive to the needs of others. The new school council is keen to assist in improving provision. Pupils understand their responsibilities to those less fortunate than themselves and wholeheartedly organise charitable events, such as raising money to buy water filters for Africa. The Christian ethos of the school encourages caring initiatives towards members of the school community as well as those in other parts of the world. Pupils are polite and trustworthy. The older ones are good at helping to supervise younger children during wet playtimes.

The curriculum promotes a well-rounded education. The performing arts are well represented and music is a particular strength. Many pupils learn to play string instruments and all the pupils in Year 4 are learning to play the violin. Younger pupils learn to play the ocarina. Brass lessons are also popular. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of educational visits. Visitors to the school, such as sports coaches and film makers, enhance learning. Pupils develop a wide range of skills in information and communication technology (ICT), including making videos. Special events, such as sports week, give pupils experiences of a wide range of activities, including archery and golf.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pupils' care and welfare are a top priority. They report that they feel safe and secure in school. They develop a good understanding of how to eat a balanced diet and lead healthy lifestyles. Pupils receive good guidance about exactly what they need to do to reach the next stages of learning in English, but not in mathematics. The school is trialling ways to help pupils develop an understanding of what they need to do next in mathematics. However, at the moment they are not given clear guidance about targets for

their learning or about the next steps that they should take. Pupils' well developed social skills, coupled with their eagerness to learn and the high standards they attain in academic subjects, prepare them exceptionally well for the next phase of their education.

The school's success hinges primarily on outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher has worked hard for many years to maintain an ethos that is rooted in deep concern for the success of every individual pupil. He provides inspirational leadership that motivates staff and encourages everybody to give of their best. Teachers and pupils are encouraged to aim high. The deputy headteacher takes a leading role in supporting teachers' professional development. Many staff have enrolled in advanced training courses designed to further improve pupils' learning. This contributes to the exceptionally good capacity for further improvement. The governing body, ably led by the chair, is well informed about all school issues and monitors the school's performance closely. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and appropriate priorities for improvement are identified.

There are close links with parents, who support their children's learning well. The overwhelming majority of parents are pleased with the education provided. One comment was typical, 'This is an excellent school with a very strong Christian belief that underpins its very essence'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children are bubbling with enthusiasm and are eager to learn new skills. There is a rigorous programme of teaching children the link between letters and the sounds they make. Consequently, they get a flying start in learning to read and write. They are interested in everything and their curiosity is fostered well. Imaginative teaching often features 'Mr Bear', who sends postcards to the children from foreign parts. This stimulates children's interest and they become fascinated by finding out more about their world. They investigate the many artefacts Mr Bear brings home with him from his travels. Children use their knowledge to build animal habitats for camels and tigers and make suitable environments for different farm animals. The 'Travel Agents' does a brisk business in selling holidays so that that children can visit Mr Bear. Children use the interactive whiteboard extensively for independent learning and develop a good range of computer skills. Dance and music features strongly in the curriculum and helps to develop their skills in all areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to reach the next steps in their learning in mathematics.

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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

7 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Mary's C of E (VA) Primary School, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 4JJ

What a lovely school! I thoroughly enjoyed my short time with you. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful. There are lots of good things that make your school so great. Here are some of them.

- Your headteacher is an outstanding leader who helps all the staff to make sure that each and every one of you gets the best education possible. You told me that you will miss him when he retires next year.
- You are extremely pleasant and kind to each other and this makes the school a happy place to be.
- You are keen to learn and reach high standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Music is a strength of the school and many of you are learning to play musical instruments.
- You are good at sport and have opportunities to try all sorts of different sporting activities.
- You know how to stay safe and look after yourselves.
- You are sensible and take your responsibilities seriously.
- You develop a good range of computer skills.
- The film you made to explain the new playground signs is excellent.
- Your teachers work hard on planning interesting lessons and are always keen to find new ways to make your learning even more successful.
- Your parents support the school wholeheartedly and are keen for you to do well.

You have a good understanding of how to reach the next stages of your learning in literacy and this helps you to reach high standards. You are not so sure about your targets in numeracy so I have asked Mr Gourlay to make sure that you are clearer about how to get even better at mathematics. It might help you to do even better.

I think that there are exciting times ahead. I wish you every success in the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your learning.

All best wishes

John Messer