

St Mary's CofE (Aided) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126029
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	315402
Inspection dates	3–4 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Bradbury
Headteacher	Shelley Dutson
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2003
School address	Normandy Horsham RH12 1JL
Telephone number	01403 265999
Fax number	01403 252071

Age group	4–10
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

There are rather more boys than girls in this average size school. Pupils come from mainly advantaged backgrounds and they join the school with above average skills and capabilities. There are relatively few pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The deputy headteacher took over temporarily as acting headteacher 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: 1

St Mary's is an outstanding school where pupils achieve exceptionally well and attain very high standards. Parents appreciate this, along with the high quality of support that their children receive. One typically wrote, 'I am very pleased with the progress that the children are making academically. I am also very appreciative of the dedication and commitment of all the staff and the great pastoral care shown to all the children at the school.' The teaching is outstanding overall because it is consistently good or better, and it is this that has given pupils the push to do so well in the national tests. The scores in mathematics, though well above average, are not quite as high as those in the other core subjects of English and science. This is because pupils have less opportunity to apply their numeracy skills practically across different subjects than they do to use their literacy skills. The many very able pupils in the school achieve very well because they are set work that challenges and extends them. Though they still do well, less able pupils and some of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not make such rapid progress as others in mathematics because they are sometimes set work that is too difficult for them. Pupils' success in the core subjects has not been at the expense of the wider curriculum. Pupils greatly enjoy and achieve very well across a very broad range of subjects. Parents obviously value this. One explained, 'I already knew St Mary's had an excellent academic record, but what most impressed me was the emphasis put on personal, social, health and citizenship education, which appears to be seamlessly part of all they do.' This certainly contributes to pupils' very keen awareness of what they need to do to keep healthy. They feel extremely safe because behaviour is excellent and staff deal quickly and effectively with any problems that occur. Parents, who praised the way in which a minor incident was dealt with, reported that, as a result, their son 'not only loves school but feels he can always rely on his teachers to act in his best interests'. Many parents comment on how, from their start in the Reception Year through the many responsibilities they take in the school community, their children have grown in confidence and self-esteem during their time at St Mary's. The success of the school is down to the impressive way in which staff and governors work together as a team and, in the words of the school aims, 'Enable all our children to discover their full potential'. Though some parents are naturally apprehensive about the uncertainty arising from the temporary leadership arrangements, many made a point of writing to affirm their confidence in the acting headteacher and the staff team. School leaders and governors have a crystal clear picture of the school's very many strengths but they remain ambitious for still better standards, especially in mathematics. This commendable lack of complacency led to some undue modesty in the school's self-evaluation. Nonetheless, St Mary's has demonstrated a remarkably consistent record in maintaining high academic standards and strong personal development over the years since the last inspection, including through staff and leadership changes. This shows that the school remains very well placed to continue to advance.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children get off to an excellent start in the Reception Year because of outstanding teaching and the care taken to help them quickly adjust to school life. What most stands out is the way in which children are encouraged to have a go at things, so that all have the confidence to try to answer questions even when they are not absolutely sure of the answer. Parents especially praise the arrangements for home visits and the links with feeder pre-schools. One wrote, 'Our son has really enjoyed his first weeks at St Mary's. He is well cared for and the transition from

nursery to primary school was very easy.' Another, whose daughter has now just started in Year 1, explained how she had started in the Reception class 'with very little confidence and slight behaviour problems' but that 'this has been completely transformed and she is full of confidence and joy'. Almost all children reach the goals expected for them by the end of the Reception Year and a great many exceed them.

What the school should do to improve further

Ensure that work in mathematics is pitched at the right level for those who find the subject more difficult and increase opportunities for all pupils to develop and apply their numeracy skills in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are very high, and have been consistently so since before the last inspection. This is evident in pupils' very high scores in both the Year 2 and Year 6 national tests. In 2007, as in previous years, Year 6 pupils' test scores were the equivalent of more than a year ahead of national. Pupils exceeded the challenging targets set for them, with an impressive 86% attaining the higher Level 5 in the national tests in English and science. This is way above the figure in most schools. These very high standards show that boys and girls achieve exceptionally well, even taking account of their above average starting points. Standards are well above average in mathematics, but they are not quite as high as in English and science. Though they do well, less able pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, do not make the exceptional progress in mathematics that they make in English because work is not always pitched at the right level for them. Nonetheless, pupils' excellent key skills prepare them exceedingly well for the next stage of their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are enthusiastic about school and are keen to learn and do well. Their very sensible attitudes and exemplary behaviour contribute to the excellent progress and high standards that they achieve. Parents comment on the school's 'very good family atmosphere' and about how much their children enjoy their time at St Mary's. Attendance is consistently high. Pupils make a real commitment to their drive to adopt healthy lifestyles: as many as a quarter journey to school each morning on the 'walking bus'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Through the numerous opportunities that pupils have to take responsibility, from eco-monitors in the youngest classes to school captains in Year 6, they grow in confidence. As a parent explained, 'My daughter has blossomed from a shy and easily swayed child to a confident, mature and self-assured little girl.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is outstanding overall because pupils benefit from a consistent diet of good and better teaching. Teachers promote excellent relationships with pupils and ensure very positive attitudes to learning. The many practical activities engage all pupils, and impact well, especially on boys' progress. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to ensure that pupils with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities do well. Teachers make very good use of interactive whiteboards to make learning interesting and exciting. Targeted support and tasks for more able pupils help them to make outstanding progress. However, the pace of learning and the challenges set are not consistently well matched to the needs of some pupils who find mathematics more difficult.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has worked hard to develop a curriculum which is broad and balanced and which meets the needs of the pupils. Strong, imaginative links between literacy and a wide range of other subjects ensure the pupils are given lively and interesting things to do. For example, pupils in an English lesson were using computers to correct spellings in a history text. However, there is no similar range of opportunities for pupils to make creative and practical use of their numeracy skills. Through links with a local secondary school, pupils in Years 3 to 6 learn French, and pupils at the top of the school speak enthusiastically of the annual residential visit to France. Many pupils take up opportunities to learn a variety of musical instruments and enjoy taking part in the school orchestra. A great many take part in the good range of extra-curricular clubs on offer.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Adults know the pupils very well and provision for pupils' well-being is very good, as is reflected in their outstanding personal development and attitudes to learning. Many parents especially praise this aspect of the school's work, describing St Mary's as 'a very caring school with a good rapport between all pupils and teachers'. Academic guidance is very good. Marking gives pupils helpful feedback about how well they are doing and sets out clearly what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils have and refer to individual targets that also help them to focus on achieving the next steps in their learning. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are robust and are regularly reviewed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The consistently high standards in the years since the last inspection and before show that this is an extremely well run school. Changes of staff, including changes at the top, have been managed very effectively so that they have not disturbed pupils' progress. This is due to the very effective team approach taken by staff and governors, so that all share a commitment and drive to achieve the school aims and help every child to succeed. Rigorous systems for checking on pupils' progress and monitoring the education that the school provides have helped to maintain consistently high quality provision and have enabled the school to set and surpass its very ambitious targets for success in the national tests. Very good use is made of partnership arrangements with outside bodies, including local secondary schools and the church, to enhance provision for St Mary's pupils. The partnership with parents is especially strong. Governors and staff recognise the important contribution parents make in supporting their children's learning. Parents are also very supportive of the school but some, particularly those who remain unhappy about the decision last year to modify the school uniform, call for improvements in communication. One summed up their views saying, 'St Mary's is an excellent school. My children

are happy and well taught. I do think, however, that the school could do more to seek the views of parents and to keep them informed'.

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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?	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	2

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?	2
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**

9 October 2007 Dear Pupils Inspection of St Mary's CE Primary School, Horsham RH12 1JL Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We could see how proud you are of your school, and you have every right to be. St Mary's is an outstanding school where you do very well indeed and achieve very high standards. We were impressed by how confident you are and by all the jobs you take on in school. We were pleased to see how well behaved you are and how your very sensible attitudes help you to learn. The school takes very good care of you and that is why you feel safe and secure. You also take seriously the need to be fit and healthy. It is good to see so many of you travelling to school each day on the 'walking bus'. Some of your parents told us they were concerned about all the staff changes in your school. We don't think they need to worry because the governors and entire staff teamwork so well together to provide you with such an outstanding education. Teachers help you all to learn and do your best, and we were delighted to see that the success you have in English, maths and science does not mean that other subjects are left out. I have said that you do very well and standards are very high, but we noticed that the standards you reach in maths are not quite as high as those in English and science. We have asked the school to look at ways of helping you to do even better in maths. Just as you now have lots of opportunities to improve your writing through the work you do in lots of different subjects, we have asked the school to find ways for you to use your numeracy skills when learning other things. We have also asked teachers to make sure that they are not giving some of you work in maths that is too hard for you. You can help too by making good use of your maths targets and by asking for help when you need it. Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you. Best wishes Selwyn Ward Lead Inspector

Annex B



9 October 2007

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Inspection of St Mary's CE Primary School, Horsham RH12 1JL

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Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Selwyn Ward', with a vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Selwyn Ward
Lead Inspector