

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126048
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	315411
Inspection date	20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Carole Skinner

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	241
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	36
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Leese
Headteacher	Alyson Heath
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	13 June 2005
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Link Lane Pulborough RH20 2AN
Telephone number	01798 872007
Fax number	01798 875537

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

exploring the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation

evaluating the impact of recent initiatives to accelerate pupils' progress, especially in reading and writing

establishing those aspects of pupils' personal development and the school's provision that are outstanding.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, discussions with staff, governors and pupils, samples of pupils' work, parents' questionnaires, observations of pupils at lunchtime and a review of the school's most recent assessment and monitoring evidence. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail but the inspectors 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

This average-sized school caters for pupils from widely differing social backgrounds. It serves a growing area where there is considerable unemployment. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average but the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is above average. A much higher than usual proportion of pupils join the school during the course of each year. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) caters for children from the age of four in Reception. In addition to achieving Healthy Schools and Eco-School awards, the school has received countywide recognition for its work in developing the extensive grounds as a resource for learning.

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 where pupils make exceptionally good progress in all aspects of their learning and personal development. Parents' views of the school are overwhelmingly positive and many wrote in glowing terms of the school's 'vibrant atmosphere' and its 'wonderful nurturing environment'. The school has clearly earned its place at the heart of the village community, and its increasing popularity has resulted in a steadily rising roll. Pupils thoroughly enjoy being at school, respect each other and their teachers and thrive on the many opportunities to take on responsibilities. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. Outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is founded firmly on the school's Christian ethos which pervades every facet of school life. As a result, pupils grow into well-rounded confident youngsters who are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education and their future lives. Adults ensure that pupils of all capabilities feel valued and included and have the opportunity to make an important contribution to the life of the school and the community.

Pupils make exceptionally good progress as they move through the school. Many start school with poor language and communication skills so that overall attainment on entry is well below expectations. Children get off to a truly flying start in Reception, particularly in developing social and language skills, confidence and independence. Rising standards in Reception are now having a knock-on effect further up the school so that standards are above average in every year group, including the current Year 6 where the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is much higher than usually seen. This represents outstanding achievement and reflects the very high quality teaching and curriculum that the school offers every pupil. The school has introduced many very effective strategies to accelerate pupils' progress in reading and writing, especially for boys. These strategies are having a marked impact, not only in raising standards but also increasing pupils' enjoyment. Nevertheless, the school rightly acknowledges that progress in writing is not yet as rapid as that in reading and it continues to maintain a strong focus on improving this area of learning.

One of the key ingredients in the school's success is the way senior leaders and teachers have worked together to sharpen their skills in assessing pupils' attainment and tracking their progress. Teachers use this information on a daily basis to plan work that matches each pupil's needs and challenges them at an appropriate level. Consequently, teachers have high expectations of every pupil and respond quickly if any show signs of underachievement. Teachers are also very skilled at using a wide range of interesting resources and methods to motivate pupils and make lessons interesting. Learning always moves along at a good pace because teachers and assistants are aware that pupils learn in different ways and at different speeds, and take account of this in each lesson. Pupils know their targets and teachers often remind them of these and explain how pupils can move on to the next stage of learning so that they know what to do to improve.

Pupils do outstandingly well across a wide range of subjects because the curriculum is exceptionally well planned. Meaningful links between subjects make for 'joined-up learning' where pupils appreciate the relevance of new knowledge and skills to everyday life. A superb variety of extra-curricular activities, visitors and visits to places of interest add a further dimension to pupils' learning and contribute significantly to their enjoyment and all-round development, especially in art, sports, music and drama. Vibrant displays in every classroom and corridor bear witness to the pupils' pride in their achievements and the teachers' skill in

promoting effective learning. Imaginative and creative use of the school grounds vastly enriches pupils' learning and enjoyment.

Excellent levels of care and support ensure that every pupil feels safe and secure. The school places great emphasis on keeping fit and healthy and pupils are gradually taking this on board, although a few have yet to fully embrace what this means for the contents of their lunchboxes! Pupils are encouraged to play an active role in running the school and learn the basics of what it means to live in a democratic society by electing or serving as school council members. The school does a great job of preparing pupils for life in a culturally diverse society and developing their early understanding of global citizenship.

Dynamic leadership and management provide clear strategic direction for the school's continuing development, based on rigorous and accurate evaluation of its performance. Successful teamwork involving all staff and governors, under the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, ensures consistency and clarity of purpose. Excellent partnerships with parents, the local community and external agencies greatly enrich pupils' experiences. High quality provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and equally good provision for those who are gifted and talented reflect the school's commitment to providing equality of opportunity for all pupils. Senior leaders' high aspirations and determined pursuit of excellence are reflected in their reluctance to judge some aspects of the school outstanding. This constant striving for improvement shows that the school is exceptionally well equipped to build upon its already outstanding achievements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make outstanding progress in the EYFS and are now reaching above average standards by the time they start in Year 1. Standards have risen significantly over the past four years in response to improvements in the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning. Children settle quickly in Reception as a result of excellent transition arrangements. They are happy, confident and thoroughly enjoy learning. Children learn through a variety of very well planned first-hand experiences that encourage them to explore their environment and engage in imaginative play. They develop independence through making choices and learning to take responsibility for their own actions. Excellent teaching of reading, writing and number skills ensures that all children have a good grasp of the basics by the end of their first year in school. The exceptionally well planned curriculum takes very good account of children's needs and interests. Superb opportunities for outdoor learning mirror those taking place in the classroom. Outstanding leadership of the provision ensures consistent approaches between classes and very high expectations for every child. Teachers maintain very close relationships with the children's parents and carers and involve them in their children's learning every step of the way. All adults give the highest possible priority to children's welfare, health and safety. Careful monitoring of every child's progress from day to day through focused observations and discussion ensures that adults build carefully on children's existing knowledge and skills in all areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress in developing writing skills throughout the school.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

21 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's CE Primary School, Pulborough RH20 2 AN

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you at work. We were very impressed by how well you behaved and by how proud you are of your school. Many of you and your parents told us how good your school is. We agree that it is an outstanding school.

Here are some of the things that make your school very special.

- You make excellent progress because the teachers make learning enjoyable for you – but they also expect you to work hard, which you do!
- You obviously enjoy all aspects of school life and make an excellent contribution to the way it runs.
- The school helps you to become confident and independent, and this prepares you very well for your next school and your future lives.
- All the adults look after you extremely well and help you to feel very safe and secure.
- The teachers keep very close checks on your progress and make sure that you always have work that challenges you and extends your learning.
- Almost all of you take part in the very wide range of extra activities that the school provides, such as sport, music and drama. Your artwork is impressive.
- The adults who run the school do an outstanding job. They are always looking for ways to make your learning more interesting and challenging so that you all make excellent progress.

The school is working very hard to help you all to reach higher standards in reading and writing. You are now making much faster progress than you used to but you are still doing better in reading than in writing. We have asked your teachers to make sure that you develop good writing skills more quickly as you move up through the school.

We are sure you will carry on working hard and enjoying your time at St Mary's.

Yours faithfully

Carole Skinner Lead inspector