

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 109995 |
| Local Authority | Slough |
| Inspection number | 325074 |
| Inspection dates | 23–24 June 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | John Carnaghan |

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.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 469 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 0 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs J Smith |
| Headteacher | Mrs G Morrison |
| Date of previous school inspection | 23 May 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Yew Tree Road Slough SL1 2AR |
| Telephone number | 01753 534791 |
| Fax number | 01753 512452 |

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|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Age group | 3–11 |
| Inspection dates | 23–24 June 2009 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school has more than eight out of ten pupils from minority ethnic groups. The largest groups of such pupils are from Asian Pakistani and Asian Indian backgrounds. Almost three quarters of pupils do not speak English as their first language; this is well above average. The school experiences a very high turnover of pupils. It has broadly average proportions with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery class, which has different groups of children in the morning and the afternoon, and two Reception classes. The school holds the Activemark Award and Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Mary's is a good school. It has a restless drive for improvement and a desire to make a real difference to the lives of its pupils. The school has a number of outstanding features that help promote good achievement, despite having a very high turnover of pupils. Parents strongly support the school and have very few concerns. One spoke for many, writing, 'My son loves going to school and has gained a lot of friends. He also adores his teachers, who are strict on discipline but loving and caring at the same time.' Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills well below those expected for their age. The Nursery and Reception classes prepare them exceptionally well for school life. In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils achieve well and, by the end of Year 6, standards are average. The school strives to include all, so that pupils' achievement is uniformly good. The key factors in the way the school overcomes barriers to learning are its outstanding teaching, learning and curriculum. Teachers plan lessons very carefully to engage and challenge pupils. Good marking and assessment provide clear information where extra help is required and teachers adapt what they do well to meet pupils' learning needs. Pupils say lessons are fun and appreciate the creative way subjects are combined and taught. Their maturity and enthusiasm for learning ensure they get the most out of lessons. The curriculum is adapted to meet pupils' most important needs, specifically in language and health. It provides enriching experiences for all. That these great strengths do not promote excellent achievement is due to external factors. In particular, the very high turnover of pupils is detrimental to their achievement, despite the school's great efforts to minimise disruption. Adults share a commitment to pupils' welfare and their care for their charges is outstanding. Pupils know about their standards and have helpful targets for improvement. They understand they always have someone to turn to for advice and guidance. These strengths promote pupils' excellent personal development. Behaviour is outstanding and relationships throughout the school are most constructive. Pupils enjoy school enormously; their enthusiasm is splendid and has an extremely positive impact on their learning. The headteacher provides a strong role model for staff and leads very effectively in seeking ways to improve the school. She is firmly supported by a talented senior leadership team. Staff work cohesively to provide the best possible opportunities for all, because they share the same values. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection and capacity for the future is also good. Governors provide consistent support for the school and, with improving monitoring, are now well placed to challenge the school more.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children enter the Nursery with skills well below those expected for their age. They have particularly low aptitudes in literacy, numeracy and personal development. Excellent provision in the Nursery helps children settle quickly into school and they soon learn to collaborate with adults and friends and to play and work independently. Their excellent achievement continues as they move into the Reception classes and, as children enter Year 1, they attain the levels expected for their age. They have made outstanding progress in many areas, notably in reading, writing and using numbers. Children have received a very good grounding for their later education. Outstanding leadership and management ensure the Early Years Foundation Stage is extremely well organised. All staff share values and work together closely. Children's transition into school life is eased by home visits and positive relationships with parents. Teachers run helpful parents' workshops, to develop their understanding of how best they can support their

children's learning. Welfare provision is excellent. Adults know children very well and keep a close eye on their activities and needs. Arrangements to safeguard children are robust and up to date and the setting is secure. Whenever children start school, there are good procedures to assess their prior experiences and design a programme of suitable activities. The excellent curriculum covers all requirements and makes the fullest possible use of the superb indoor and outdoor accommodation to provide stimulating experiences for all. Visits and visitors, such as the recent influx of farm animals, provide enriched experiences and great stimuli for speaking and writing. Teachers work closely with their fellow professionals in providing lively, enjoyable sessions. Nursery children loved the outdoor treasure hunt, where they happily roamed about in the garden, discovering and sorting out silver numbers. Adults manage children expertly, knowing when to lead and when to let children learn independently, providing good opportunities for children to initiate their own activities. Staff carefully record children's accomplishments to develop a complete record of their progress. This informs planning and indicates which individuals may require extra assistance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate its successes in raising pupils' standards, by ensuring that high-quality learning experiences are provided consistently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school promotes good achievement in the face of significant barriers. In particular, the very high turn-over of pupils is a potential disruption to their progress. However, the school thoroughly assesses each new entrant and works intensively to enable every new pupil to settle as rapidly as possible. In the face of over 100 percent turnover of pupils in Key Stage 2, pupils' standards and achievement are commendable.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly average and have seen steady improvements in recent years, despite considerable pupil mobility. There are no significant variations in standards between subjects. Given their various starting points, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, including those with moderate learning difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language.

Pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 also reach standards that are generally average. These have improved in recent years. Considering their significant barriers to learning, pupils' achievement is good. The keys to these impressive outcomes continuing for pupils across the school are the high quality of teaching and learning and the outstanding curriculum.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils behave exceptionally well and are very courteous. They enjoy school and have a strong work ethic, because teachers set high expectations of work and behaviour. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and promoted very effectively throughout the curriculum. Pupils' ability to reflect was evident in an assembly, where the Key Stage 1 pupils contemplated the word 'courage'. They sympathise with people who are less fortunate, raising money for the homeless and other charities. Pupils' cultural development is excellent, promoted through subjects such as music, art, history and geography. They fully understand how and why they should keep fit and healthy.

Pupils know very well how to be safe and avoid unnecessary risks both in school and out. They take on responsibilities to support the school community willingly. Younger pupils water flowers and keep the school tidy and older pupils help younger ones in the playgrounds. The school council is very active. Pupils learn about democratic processes, such as representing majority decisions in selecting members. The school's emphasis on pupils working together and their achievement in basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) prepare them very well for their future lives. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now average, due to the school's hard work. However, extended leave and religious holidays taken during term time have an impact on attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve well because of strong teaching, much of which is outstanding. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and they present their lessons in an exciting manner. In many lessons, creativity is integral and pupils' learning is enhanced by their active involvement. Activities are well matched to the needs of all pupils. Consequently, pupils are excited and enthused with their learning and give of their best. Their behaviour is invariably excellent, so there are few interruptions to the flow of learning.

Lessons are structured to help pupils develop their command of English. Pupils' literacy skills are particularly well boosted by numerous opportunities for speaking and listening. Teachers use the visual input from ICT very well to ensure that pupils with limited English are included and informed. Staff are skilled at asking questions that require pupils to analyse information and to express opinions and emotions.

Pupils are encouraged to assess their learning themselves, which they do sensibly. Marking is friendly, encouraging and usually very informative in helping pupils to improve their work. Those who need extra assistance are regularly withdrawn for small group or individual help, where they receive concentrated support from skilled practitioners.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy a wide range of experiences that promote excellent personal and good academic skills. The school responds effectively to meet the needs of the many pupils whose home language is not English. Literacy, numeracy and ICT are high priorities and pupils develop skills in specific lessons, as well as through other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 6 designed story books, integrating art, English and ICT. Pupils enjoy opportunities to learn French, German and Spanish.

Excellent use is made of immediate and wider localities to add breadth and relevance to learning. Pupils learn to value art, because they study a wide variety of cultures within the local community and beyond. An exceptional range of clubs, visits and visitors brings pupils' learning alive and contributes powerfully to their personal development. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is carefully planned, with resources that support them to achieve their potential.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care for pupils lies at the heart of this community. The school is very safe and secure and adults show great commitment in promoting pupils' health and safety. The school's policies and procedures for safeguarding, risk assessment and child protection are securely in place. It holds Healthy School Status and the Activemark Award for making exceptionally good provision in these areas.

Very good tracking of pupils' progress ensures that any learning or development concerns are quickly identified. As a result, pupils with moderate and other learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive prompt attention and effective support tailored to their needs. Induction and support for pupils who are new to English are very effective in settling them in and helping them to acquire the language.

Academic support and guidance are very good. Teachers know pupils very well and monitor academic progress systematically. There are clear expectations for progress from year to year, based on pupils' starting points. Pupils have good knowledge of their individual targets and what they need to do to reach them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, ably assisted by senior managers, has a clear vision for the school. This is based on the school's inclusive ethos. Raising achievement and caring for pupils are central to what the school does. They are promoted through the school's commitment to the pupils' personal development, a powerful focus upon improving the quality of teaching and learning and the concept of adding excitement and enrichment through developing the curriculum. The quality of these strands and their growing consistency contributes powerfully to rising standards.

Targets are challenging and are based, in part, on individual staff interviews. The school has achieved good improvements in relationship to its development priorities and its focused performance management is central to this. The way the school promotes community cohesion is outstanding and lies at the heart of effective and relevant development planning. These plans are underpinned by honest and detailed self-evaluation of the school and wider community.

Governors support the school well and fulfil their statutory obligations fully. Improving monitoring of the school's performance has helped them to become increasingly involved in establishing the strategic direction for the school and in challenging the standards that the school reaches.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

| | |
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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|---|---|
| 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

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 2 |

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 | 3 |
| 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

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|--|-----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 2 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 1 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| 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**

07 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Slough, SL1 2AR

Many thanks for the enthusiastic welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school recently. You told us that you think St Mary's is a good school and we agree! There are lots of excellent things to report. One of the best is your behaviour, which is outstanding and is one of the main elements in your outstanding personal development. The care adults give you is excellent. This means more than looking after you; they also give you lots of good advice about how you can improve your work. Teaching and learning are outstanding. You told us that lessons are fun and we saw many that were obviously most enjoyable. You play a strong part, because you are so keen to learn and you listen to your teachers really well. The mixture of subjects you study is also excellent. All these strengths mean that your achievement is good. The standards reached by the end of Year 6 are improving and are similar to most other pupils of the same age. The school is very well run by the headteacher and the staff. They are always looking for ways to improve the school and check carefully on everything the school does to make sure you have the best possible start in life. I have asked the school to improve in one important area:

- raise standards further through excellent teaching, so that they are better than those in most other schools.

Once again, thanks for all your help. It was great meeting you.

Yours faithfully

John Carnaghan

Lead Inspector