

# St Mary's RC Primary School, Axminster

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113423
<b>Local Authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	325815
<b>Inspection date</b>	18 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anne Newall

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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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	140
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Phillip Mostyn
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mark Brown
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 May 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Lyme Road Axminster EX13 5BE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01297 32785

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	18 June 2009
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**Fax number**

01297 35512

<b>Age group</b>	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.

- Whether there is sufficient evidence to suggest that progress in all key stages over time is at least satisfactory, as graded by the school.
- Whether the different aspects of pupils' personal development and well-being contribute sufficiently to their overall success as learners.
- The effectiveness of the school's actions in improving teaching and learning and assessment since the last inspection.
- Whether leadership and management at all levels are having a sufficient impact on raising standards and improving pupils' achievement.

Evidence was gathered from visits to all classes, discussions with the headteacher and other staff and governors, analysis of pupils' work, observing an assembly, speaking to a group of pupils, speaking to some parents, and scrutinising a range of documents and the questionnaires returned by parents.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but 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

St Mary's School is smaller than average, and the large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The number of children joining the school other than at the start of Reception is higher than is usually found. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made in the school's Reception class. The school building also houses a privately managed pre-school, with which it has close links. The headteacher joined the school in January 2009 in an acting capacity, and was appointed to the permanent role in March 2009.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils enjoy their time and many parents speak highly of the school and value the commitment of staff to their children's all-round development. As one wrote, 'My child is thriving; there is a caring ethos throughout the school.' Parents have confidence in the headteacher, who has been effective in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the school and implementing actions, which are already bringing about improvements.

All groups of pupils achieve well. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities broadly as expected for their age, although there is some variation from year to year. They make good progress and enter Year 1 with confidence. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and achieve standards above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen steadily over the past two years and the school's data for the current year show this improvement has been maintained. By the time pupils leave Year 6, their standards in English, mathematics and science are above average, indicating good progress from their starting points. There are occasional exceptions to this, for example, the 2008 Year 6 test results, but the school was well aware of the reason for this and put into place strategies to secure improvement this year.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Through calm and thoughtful assemblies and the curriculum, they develop a good understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of life, and pupils say with conviction, 'We are all part of one human family.' The school promotes community cohesion well, particularly through pupils' involvement in their school and the local community. Pupils gain a clear understanding of multicultural diversity through the curriculum and through visits within the United Kingdom and by welcoming visitors from around the world. They play and work together happily, displaying good behaviour, and are proud of the way older pupils take care of the younger ones. Pupils feel safe and secure, and are confident that if they have a problem, staff will sort it out. Parents wrote positively about the school's community feel. Pupils enjoy school, in particular the practical elements of lessons and the wide range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities provided. They contribute well to their local community, for example singing in The Minster and organising a Family Fun evening. Their attendance is good and they are enthusiastic about school and their learning. The pastoral care of pupils is strong and all procedures to keep the pupils safe and secure were in place at the time of the inspection. Pupils appreciate the warm and caring relationships they have with their teachers, as well as the fact that teachers make their lessons fun. The curriculum meets pupils' needs and interests well and is responsive to the local environment, including for example, visits to the Jurassic Coast to reinforce learning about dinosaurs. Teaching is good overall, with some outstanding and some satisfactory features. Skilled teaching assistants are well deployed to support individuals and groups. In the best teaching, teachers create a purposeful learning environment, explicitly share the purpose of the lesson with pupils and encourage them to be active participants. Where teaching is less effective, pupils are not challenged to move on in their understanding. Teachers generally plan well for mixed-age classes so that pupils of all abilities are provided with work that is well matched to their needs. Although there are examples of constructive marking to help pupils make the next steps in learning, this is not consistent across all classes. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress due to the effective support they receive.

Leadership and management are effective and the new headteacher has renewed a sense of drive and determination. Together with senior staff, he has demonstrated a clear commitment

to striving for high academic standards within a caring ethos. The school's self-evaluation is accurate although plans for development, whilst appropriate, are not always sufficiently focused upon the outcomes for pupils, making it difficult for the school to judge the success of its actions. Whilst senior leaders have a good understanding of how to improve, the role of middle leaders is less well developed and insufficiently linked to pupils' progress. Notwithstanding this, several changes have been implemented which are already bringing about improvement, such as individual achievement plans for some pupils, closer monitoring of teaching and learning, and increased use of assessment data. Although challenging targets for pupils are set, school leaders are aware of the need to review these regularly and make better use of the data to set increasingly challenging targets for individuals so that they make even faster progress. Governors are kept well informed and are closely involved with the work of the school. They understand their duties and responsibilities, and provide a good balance of support and challenge to the headteacher and staff by asking probing questions and acting as 'critical friends'. These factors indicate that the school has good capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where the warm and welcoming atmosphere, together with good relationships with parents, the on-site pre-school and other local pre-schools, ensures children feel settled and secure. Staff work well together and quickly get to know each child. They ensure that children's welfare is promoted well. They work closely with the children and observe them carefully to assess their capabilities and interests, and plan activities across all areas of learning which meet the children's individual needs and enable them to make good progress. Sometimes children work with an adult who will help them to develop greater understanding through talking and asking questions. At other times, children choose from a selection of activities, indoors or outdoors, to develop their skills of working independently or with other children. However, the range of activities provided does not always support the learning objectives. The classroom and outdoor environment are attractive and well equipped, and the school has plans to provide a canopy for the outdoor area, which will make it usable throughout the year. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed, as indicated by the care taken to ensure the good personal development and well-being of the children, and the good progress they make, showing enjoyment, perseverance and increasing confidence.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is always good or better by ensuring that activities in lessons match the learning needs of all pupils.
- Ensure consistent use of academic guidance through marking, and make better use of assessment data to set increasingly challenging targets for all pupils.
- Develop the role of middle leaders so that they have a clearer understanding of monitoring the progress of individual pupils.

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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?	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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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

<sup>1</sup>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.



## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
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?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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?	2
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**

19 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic VA Primary School, Axminster EX13 5BE

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave me and the other inspector when we visited your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed visiting you in class and watching you play outdoors.

We think you attend a good school, and you agree, saying that you enjoy your lessons and 'school is brilliant'. There have been many improvements recently, which some of you told me about when I met with you. You love all the clubs and visits that staff in your school arrange. Most of your parents appreciate the efforts that the school staff make to provide you with a lively and interesting education. Most of you make good progress because most lessons are good or better; they are carefully planned to build upon what you already know and can do. We saw lots of good work in your books, most of which is very carefully marked by teachers so that you know what to do next. Sometimes, though, the marking is not as helpful.

To help improve your school more, we have asked your headteacher and staff to do the following.

- Make sure that all teaching is good or better so that all of you have activities that make you think and work hard.
- Make sure that when they are marking your work, all teachers give you advice about how to improve, and use information about your progress to plan work which is more difficult
- Ensure middle leaders have a clear understanding of how to monitor the progress of all pupils

I hope you will help, by always trying your best. Good luck for your future.

Yours faithfully

Anne Newall

Lead inspector