

St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116880
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	326473
Inspection date	28 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

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)	91
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	Ian Williams
Headteacher	Allyson Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Fownhope Hereford HR1 4PG
Telephone number	01432 860474
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- where improvements to mathematics are most needed
- how well school leaders use data to investigate performance and drive improvement
- whether pupils' personal development is very strong, as viewed by the school.

Evidence was gathered from analysis of school data, the school's self-evaluation, the previous inspection report, pupils' work, parent questionnaires, informal discussion with parents, school policies, monitoring reports and other documents. Lessons were observed and discussions were held with pupils, senior staff, the chair of governors and the school's improvement partner.

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 is a small, rural primary school. An average number of pupils have learning difficulties. Almost all pupils are of White British origin. There is one Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is a privately run breakfast club on site. The after-school club was taken over, at short notice, from a private provider by the school a few days before the inspection. About seven pupils aged four to 11 attend regularly. A privately run playgroup for children aged two to four years also operates from the school premises.

Key for inspection grades

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. The school is a lively, harmonious community where pupils thrive and parents are particularly welcome. Pupils make good progress and achieve well in their academic work and show outstanding personal development and well-being. This is due to good leadership and management which ensures not only that teaching and the care and guidance given to pupils is good, but that the excellent curriculum offered is very rich. The result is that pupils enjoy school very much and are keen to join in with the many activities taking place. The school promotes community cohesion well. In particular there are strong links locally and internationally, including regular visitors from African countries. This has promoted a good understanding and respect among pupils for the lives, values and beliefs of people who are different to themselves.

When children enter Reception, their skills are broadly as expected for their age and by the time they leave Year 6, standards are above national averages, showing good progress and achievement. Progress and achievement are good overall for pupils of all abilities, including the more able and those with learning difficulties, and in all age groups. A significant proportion of pupils make outstanding progress, especially those of below average ability, who often reach national averages by the end of Year 6. This is particularly so in English, where progress in writing is often rapid. Standards in mathematics are average, rather than above, owing to slower progress having been made in the past compared to English and science. However, progress in this subject has been good recently and standards are beginning to rise. Improved teaching skills, a greater focus on mathematical language for problem solving and a more structured mathematics curriculum have contributed to this improvement.

The great majority of parents are very positive about the school, citing the 'safe and caring environment' and 'great choice of after-school activities' among the many things they appreciate. Parents make a substantial contribution to the life of the school, including dropping in to eat lunch with the pupils and regularly attending assembly. Pupils also have a strongly positive view of their life in school. They feel very safe and show considerable care for one another, particularly in the way they help each other at playtime. One relatively new pupil was keen to say how much he was learning in this school. Very strong links with other agencies and experienced, caring support from within the school ensure that pupils' well-being is fully nurtured.

Most lessons are fun and pupils enjoy them. There are many strengths in teaching. These include excellent relationships in lessons, leading to outstanding behaviour and an atmosphere where learning is valued and pupils are enthusiastic about their work. Teaching is lively, with a wide variety of interesting and motivating activities and good use of information and communication technology to aid understanding. Pupils in one mathematics lesson, for example, were skilled in using the interactive whiteboard to show how they had worked out a mathematical problem. Practice is not always consistent, however. In a few lessons pupils are not clear about the quality of their own learning or what they need to do to improve. This is because they do not all have suitable, individual subject targets in English and mathematics to support them in understanding the next steps in their learning. This results in satisfactory rather than good learning for a few, especially in mathematics. The curriculum is constantly evolving and engages pupils' interest and enthusiasm very well. Pupils are actively involved in planning what they will learn and links between subjects are very strong. The curriculum is very well matched to pupils' different needs in the mixed-age classes following detailed assessment in all the subjects. There are extensive

activities and projects to help pupils develop their excellent personal skills, especially in enabling them to take on many responsibilities and contribute a great deal to the life of the school and community. This includes acting as junior road safety officers, helping at a day centre for elderly people and devising their own classroom rules each year. The curriculum is very strong in enabling pupils to understand how to lead safe and healthy lives, with plenty of sport and good food available, which pupils value highly. Procedures to safeguard pupils, including during the after-school provision, meet requirements.

School leaders, including governors, have moved the school forward effectively, particularly in improving the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics. The number of good lessons has increased and pupils' personal development has improved since the last inspection. The capacity to improve is good. Self-evaluation is accurate and a detailed knowledge of individual pupils' progress helps inform future planning. However the use of data is not sufficiently well developed to ensure that progress, from this already good level, can be built upon further. This is because data are not presented in a form to enable governors and staff to have a detailed overview of where improvements are most needed. The school has already planned to develop better systems for showing overall progress for different groups and looking at trends over time, for this reason.

The newly acquired extended school provision ensures that pupils and children in Reception continue to have somewhere safe to play after school both indoors and out, with plenty of adult support, good healthy food and an opportunity to complete homework well under supervision. With their good basic skills, strong ability to work in teams and excellent attitudes, pupils are well prepared for their futures and the next school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Leadership and the quality of provision in Reception are good. Children are well prepared before they join, following good liaison with parents and pre-school settings. Children enter with a wide mix of skills. They make consistently good progress, supported by thorough assessment, and, by the time they enter Year 1, have reached national averages, working securely within the areas of learning. The delightful environment and well-organised curriculum encourage children to investigate for themselves and explore their surroundings. There is a buzz of excited chatter as children get involved in making a tigers' den, or use numbers as 'snowboards', working out which ones are bigger. Skilled teacher direction supports good progress in numeracy and writing and some children can recognise numbers to 100. The outdoor classroom extends naturally from indoors, which enables children to move freely between the two according to their chosen activities. With only one adult present some of the time, it is not always possible to observe details of all the different learning activities taking place. The school recognises that this sometimes slows learning, and is planning to increase adult support so that timely intervention is available more often. High quality support promotes children's welfare very well. Children show excellent development of their personal skills and take plenty of responsibility, not only by becoming increasingly independent, looking after themselves and helping in class, but showing care and responsibility towards others. They are particularly inspired by the forest school, showing a mature sensitivity to caring for the environment from an early age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that all pupils have suitable, individual, subject-based targets so that they know how to improve their own work in English and especially in mathematics.

- Improve systems for presenting data, so that leaders at all levels can use them more effectively when planning to raise standards.

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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?	1
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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

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	2
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	2
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	2

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

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	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**

29 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's C of E Primary School, Fownhope, HR1 4PG

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons.

Yours is a good school with many interesting things going on, just as you described. Senior staff work hard to keep developing the school and, for this reason, the standards you reach are high and you make good progress.

Skilled teaching helps you to make good progress in your lessons. As a result, you do particularly well in writing and science. We like the way you really enjoy your lessons and always try to do your best. You told us that your teachers make lessons fun and interesting and we can see that they help you to do well. We have, however, asked them to make sure all of you have clear targets in some subjects to help you know what you need to do to improve, especially in mathematics. In addition, we want them to improve the way information on your progress is presented to show more clearly where learning for some of you could be increased. We are sure that you will discuss this with your teachers and help them by working hard and sharing your ideas.

An outstanding curriculum helps you to make excellent progress in your social and personal skills. You were keen to tell us that the school keeps you safe and looks after you very well. It is therefore very pleasing to see that you are helping yourselves by taking plenty of exercise and eating a healthy diet. Your behaviour is excellent; especially in the way you value learning and respect others, including those who have different beliefs and ways of living.

The responsibilities that you take on within the school and wider community are impressive, especially the way you contribute your ideas to helping the environment and to improving the curriculum. It is good to know that you feel the school takes your views seriously and that you can make a difference. You clearly enjoy coming to school. We think that this, alongside your good quality basic skills and mature attitudes, helps to prepare you very well for your next school and future lives.

Yours faithfully

Patricia Potheary

Lead inspector