

St Mary's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120193
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	327222
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Edwards

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Penelope Grimwood
Headteacher	Mrs Marian Driver
Date of previous school inspection	18 May 2006
School address	The Green Bitteswell Lutterworth Leicestershire LE17 4SB
Telephone number	01455 552818
Fax number	01455 552818
Email address	office@bitteswell-st-marys.leics.sch.uk

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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited 11 lessons, and held meetings with staff, governors and groups of pupils. He observed the school's work, and looked at school tracking data, monitoring information, governing body minutes, safeguarding information, school policies and analysed 31 parent questionnaires.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement of girls in mathematics and science to see whether they do as well as boys
- the progress pupils make in their writing
- the effectiveness of the school's planning to raise the pupils' awareness of the cultural and social diversity of people.

Information about the school

St Mary's is a small school that serves the parishes of Bitteswell and Ashby Parva. Half of the pupils come from outside the catchment area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. The school has been awarded Investors in People status. The governors manage an after-school club that runs each evening.

The headteacher retires in July and her successor has been appointed.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Parents and carers are rightly very pleased with the outstanding education provided by the school. The key factors ensuring the school's success are the:

- very effective provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- excellent curriculum which provides the pupils with many interesting activities that really stimulate their learning
- consistently good teaching that ensures pupils always make at least good progress and attain high standards so preparing them very well for their move to secondary school
- excellent opportunities for pupils to undertake responsibility and to be ambassadors for their school
- extremely good care and support enabling pupils to feel very safe and secure
- excellent way the school's leadership has maintained its high standards and forged ahead with strategies to further improve its provision.

The good progress made by pupils is the result of the leadership's very careful evaluation and tracking of their needs. As a result, there have been changes to the way certain subjects are taught. For example, science is taught to single year groups rather than mixed-age classes and there is a very strong emphasis on investigative work. Consequently, pupils attain exceptionally well in this subject. The detailed tracking of pupils' progress in the major subjects provides the leadership with the opportunity to implement intervention strategies where there is any possible underachievement. Well targeted support and guidance ensures that all groups of pupils are doing as well as they should, for example the progress of girls in mathematics now matches that of boys.

The teachers' use of assessment is good, enabling them to pitch the work at the right level for the pupils. However, the school has rightly recognised that assessment is not yet linked as well as it should be to the pupils' individual learning targets, particularly in their writing. In addition, teachers do not always ensure that pupils respond to their comments on their writing. As a result, pupils are not always as clear as they might be in utilising the teachers' marking and oral comments to accelerate their progress towards their learning targets. As a consequence, standards in writing are not quite as high as in other subjects.

Self-evaluation is excellent. The school's leaders, including governors, have made

very effective use of data to determine its strengths and where improvements can be made. Regular monitoring of teaching and learning and the sharing of outstanding practice have helped to improve their quality. The governors have taken every step to ensure the incoming headteacher is well prepared to take the school forward. This, together with the continued improvement to date, demonstrates the clear potential to improve even further. The leadership is acutely aware of the pupils' limited contact with people from different backgrounds and cultures and has good strategies in place to raise pupils' awareness and understanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards further in writing by:
 - ensuring teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to respond to their written comments as to how they might improve their work
 - improving the pupils' understanding of their learning targets and what they need to do next to improve their work and reach the next level

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

For the past five years, pupils' standards in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 have been significantly above those seen nationally. The work seen during the inspection shows that these high standards have been maintained. Children usually enter the Reception class with skills and abilities above those expected for their age. They make excellent progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that on entry to Year 1 standards are well above average. Good progress is maintained throughout the rest of the school. In the lessons observed, pupils were making good progress and sometimes better than this. For example, pupils' enthusiasm to undertake science investigations and practical problem solving activities in mathematics means that they often make excellent progress. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with very well targeted support, enabling them to make progress in line with their classmates.

Pupils' reading skills are high and the school has worked hard to raise standards in writing further. It has had some success through visual learning strategies, particularly for the boys, and through providing pupils with an increasing range of writing opportunities. However, the school rightly recognises the need to continue to accelerate pupils' progress in writing.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. As part of their Second World War project, they were keen to come to school dressed up as evacuees and they spoke enthusiastically of an ancient Egyptian project and the opportunity for role play. The pupils' enthusiasm for school is seen in their attendance levels which are well above average and in their outstanding behaviour. They are very attentive in lessons and show a mature attitude when they are on the playground. They are keen to take on responsibility whether it is the work they have undertaken for the quiet garden, initiating fundraising activities for the many charities they support or looking after younger children. Pupils say they feel exceptionally safe in school and are very confident that adults will look after them should a problem arise.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

Assessments of pupils' work are undertaken regularly and rigorously and the information is used effectively by teachers to ensure work is well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils. Teachers are particularly adept at questioning pupils, not only to ensure they understand the work they are doing, but also to help learning to progress briskly. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with very clear individual learning plans that are reviewed regularly, ensuring these pupils progress as well as they should. Teachers have introduced individual learning targets for all pupils. However, there is still a little way to go to ensure that teachers link assessments to pupils' targets to ensure they all do as well as they possibly can in their writing.

Pupils are provided with many exciting and interesting activities. The many opportunities for pupils to 'live the time' really encourages and enthuses them. They spoke with great understanding and empathy of what it might have been like to have been an evacuee. The pupils demonstrate a high level of musical skill, whether it be through their instrumental playing or their enthusiastic and tuneful singing in assembly. Pupils in Key Stage 2 respond enthusiastically to the teacher's questioning in French. Strong links with the local secondary school provide very good opportunities for pupils to develop their design and technology and information and communication technology skills.

Pupils are confident to express their views because they are encouraged to do so through clear, well thought out questioning and listen appreciatively and attentively to their peers. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported by teaching assistants who have an excellent understanding of their

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

needs. The school works very effectively with a range of partners to ensure all pupils progress well, for example excellent links with the secondary school ensure gifted and talented pupils do well. The school provides very good extended care for pupils after school each day through provision managed by the governing body.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's effectiveness is due not only to the very effective leadership by the headteacher, but also because of that of other senior staff. Morale is high and there is a determination and drive to further improve the provision and to reach the challenging targets set by the senior staff. New initiatives are embraced wholeheartedly and staff are enthusiastically taking the opportunity to make the curriculum more 'creative'. The very effective monitoring and evaluation ensures that no groups of pupils or individuals underachieve. The very effective links with other agencies enables excellent guidance for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Current procedures for safeguarding and ensuring the health and safety of pupils are very comprehensive and go beyond those required. The excellent personal, social and health programme ensures pupils also have a very clear understanding of how to keep safe.

Governors are very supportive but also rigorous in challenging the leadership to improve the school's provision further. The school has produced a very detailed plan to promote community cohesion. Links with the church and the local community are excellent. The school is very aware of the need to expose its pupils to a wider range of cultures and backgrounds. Effective links have been established with schools in Leicester, London, France and Africa enhancing the pupils' awareness of different, cultures, faiths and social backgrounds. The school rightly recognises the need to fully evaluate this new programme to ascertain the level of pupils' understanding.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the	1

school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents are very happy with the start their children make in the Reception class. In most years, children enter school with skills and abilities that are above those expected for their age. As a result of the excellent assessment procedures, children are provided with a tailored programme of work that ensures they make rapid progress. The compilation of a 'learning journey' provides both staff and parents of a very clear picture of the activities children have undertaken and of the progress they make. The excellent teaching and support provides children with a very good range of interesting and stimulating activities. Children develop their independence well, making good use of the role play areas and choosing from the many interesting activities that are provided. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader manages the provision very effectively. She has a very good understanding of its strengths and how it might be improved. Whilst there are opportunities to improve children's free access to large outdoor apparatus, the leadership ensures they are provided with good organised sessions. Parents are provided with excellent opportunities to keep in touch with the work their children cover. A good number of parents take advantage of the opportunity afforded to read and share work with their children on Thursday and Friday mornings.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaires have very positive views of the school. 'I feel my son has flourished with the teachers he has had and has experienced a wonderful range of opportunities' and 'The school is extremely caring. It was lovely when my son started school to see the Year 6 boys and girls take him under their wings' are typical parent comments. A small number of parents feel that the communication between home and school is not as good as it should be. The school acknowledges this and is exploring ways of improving its website and other forms of communication.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's school to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspector received 31 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 85 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	13	0	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



12 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary School, Lutterworth, LE17 4SB

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you and watching you at work. I thoroughly enjoyed listening to your singing in assembly and watching the work you did as evacuees. I was impressed with your improving French speaking skills. Your good manners do you credit as do your excellent behaviour and the way you look after one another. You told me how much you enjoy coming to school and the interest you have in science because of the investigations you undertake.

The school provides you with an excellent education and you attain standards that are much higher than in most schools by the end of Year 6. You are given lots of interesting activities to carry out and there are many exciting visits, visitors and clubs that the school provides to make learning even more interesting. Teachers work effectively to make sure you all make good progress. Teachers tell you how well you are doing in your work but they do not always make sure you follow their guidance to reach your targets, particularly in writing.

You are very well looked after and know how to keep safe. You have a very good understanding of what food you should eat to keep healthy and the need to take plenty of exercise. You really enjoy the 'huff and puff' sessions but you did say you would like more opportunities for sport.

Those in charge of the school have worked very hard to make sure it continues to get better. You can do your part by continuing to work hard.

Yours faithfully

Paul Edwards
Lead inspector

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